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THE MONTH

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MICHAEL HODGETTS

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S. Z. YOUNG

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IN SEARCH OF NICHOLAS OWEN

By

MICHAEL HODGETTS

AT SUNRISE on 14 July 1586, the three Jesuits in England, William Weston, Henry Garnet and Robert Southwell, rode out of London to Hurleyford, a pleasant and secluded house two miles upstream from Marlow. There they lay hidden for a week, "discussing," as Weston cautiously wrote, "our future methods of work and the prospects that lay before us."¹ This conference is of crucial importance to the recusant historian. Hitherto, in the absence of any ecclesiastical government, incoming priests had simply wandered around London for a few weeks, getting in each other's way, until they were picked up and banished or executed. Meanwhile, in the provinces there were "three or four counties together as yet unfurnished with priests."² During this week, Weston gave the others all his information on Catholic houses, and plans were laid for the systematic organising of resistance county by county and house by house.

At the end of the conference Southwell rode back to London, to Lord Vaux's house at Hackney, while Garnet went to Harrowden. A fortnight later Weston was arrested, but his scheme was put into effect by Garnet, his successor as superior. Ten years later there was a network of Catholic strongholds covering every county and sheltering more than three hundred priests.

Now this network (or at least individual houses in it) has had a good deal written about it. But one essential part of it, the priest-holes built by "Little John" Owen, has been largely ignored. Only one serious study of the subject has ever been written: the late Granville Squires' *Secret Hiding Places* (London, 1933). Apart from this one book, the field has been left almost entirely to romantic-minded journalists; and many architects and archaeologists know nothing whatever about it. In consequence, of the five hundred or so priest-holes so far recorded in England and Wales, a depressingly high proportion have been

¹ William Weston, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, ed. Philip Caraman, 1955, p. 72.

² SPD 191/26 : quoted in *William Weston*, p. 78.

destroyed or drastically altered. The purpose of this article is to date some of Owen's hides and suggest how they may be used as archaeological evidence for the way the network was built up.

There were, of course, priest-holes before Owen became Fr. Garnet's servant in 1588.¹ But there is a good deal of evidence that before 1586 manor houses equipped with really good hides were few, and in any case mainly limited to the Home Counties. John Gerard comments in his *Autobiography* on the great increase in refuges which he noticed in the first few years after his landing in 1588. At first,

My hosts could seldom provide the essentials for Mass and I had therefore to bring them myself. But after a few years there was no need to do this. In nearly every house I visited later I would find vestments and everything else laid out ready for me. Moreover, before very long I had so many friends on my route and so close to one another that I hardly ever had to put up at a tavern in a journey of a hundred and fifty miles. In my last two years I don't think I slept in one a single night.²

Again, Weston speaks of a large "and suitable" house near London, which he visited in April 1585. It was not fitted with hides, and when the pursuivants arrived, all he could do was hide in a barn till dusk and then make his escape on horseback.³ Even in 1591, some houses were still using very makeshift devices, as this spy's report shows:

As you go forthe of Mr. Wynshecomb's house towards Newberry, in the first close without the gate, upon the left hand in the hegrow, there is a great oak that is hollow, and be knocking uppon it you shall fynd it to sounde. . . . Olivar Almon is a prest and did leye at Mr. Wynchcombe in Barkshere, nere Newbery: the name is Henwicke. Yf hee be not in the house, there is a grat tree wherein he is hyden.⁴

Owen did not sign his priest-holes. But there are some features which recur in houses frequented by the principal

¹ John Gerard says Owen was Garnet's servant "for seventeen or eighteen years" up to 1605-6. *Narrative of the Gunpowder Plot*, ed. Morris (1872), pp. 182-4. He may have built some hides before that, but before he became part of the Jesuit organisation such work can only have been sporadic. From 1588 it was directed and continuous.

² John Gerard: *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, ed. Philip Caraman, 1951, p. 40.

³ William Weston, pp. 23-4.

⁴ Report of the spy Robert Weston, SPD 238/62. Printed in Foley I, pp. 379-82.

Jesuits, and it is a safe guess that they indicate his hand. Such characteristics are double hides (one hide inside another), a fondness of burrowing into solid brickwork or masonry, and the provision of a bolt-hole where possible. A further clue is in Gerard's remark that Owen "did much strive to make them of several fashions in several places, that one being taken might give no light to the discovery of another."¹ This, I think, means that we can rule out as Owen's work one very common form of hide: the trapdoor-in-the-garderobe-floor. Searching an Elizabethan manor house is a long business, as anyone who has tried it will know. Sheer tedium would help the defence against the attack. But a garderobe is an easy place to find, and there are so many hides of this form that it would be the first place where a pursuivant would learn to look. Owen is not likely to have wasted his time building these holes, which far from being "of several fashions in several places" are almost a standard fitting in recusant houses. Many of them, I suspect, were amateur efforts, built before 1586. I would push this argument to the point of adding that where there are hides of this type in the same house as something certainly built by Owen, one has reason to suppose that the hides in that house were built in at least two instalments. Many houses with priest-holes before the Armada must have had improved models fitted by Owen afterwards.²

Even if we can identify some of Owen's hides, dating them might seem impossible. But the clue is in the nature of the Jesuit network. A priest would move into a certain house in a county and, working from that, establish other centres in the surrounding countryside, to which incoming priests, secular or Jesuit, could be directed. Gerard's *Autobiography* is invaluable here for it records at first hand how the thing worked. Now it is usually possible to find out when the first Jesuit centre was established in a given region, and where it was. Thus, in Worcestershire the first house was Hindlip, where Oldcorne arrived about the end of 1589. East Anglia was worked by John Gerard between 1588 and 1594 from Grimston, Lawshall and Braddocks. Richard Blount built up the network in Kent

¹ *Narrative*, p. 184.

² Certainly this happened at Braddocks (Squiers, pp. 194-5), and there are other houses where the lay-out of the hides suggests it.

from Scotney Old Castle, where he lived from 1591 to 1598. Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire were Gerard's field from 1597 to 1605. Therefore, for many houses one can give a date before which Owen would not have been building hides there; and sometimes this date can be narrowed further by a spy's report or other document.

It is, in fact, noticeable that houses with hides fall into clearly defined clusters. Thus, East Anglia is very thick with them. But only two houses in Cambridgeshire have them; and I know of none in Hertfordshire, Huntingdon or Bedfordshire. Worcestershire and Warwickshire, further west still, have a large number. But these statistics must not be pressed too hard, since they depend to some extent on whether anyone has searched in the area. Not many are known, for instance, in the Welsh Marches or in Oxfordshire and Berkshire, though these two regions were both strongly recusant. There are fruitful fields here for would-be pursuivants.

In this pilot survey, I shall stick mainly to hides which can be dated, directly or indirectly, from Gerard's *Autobiography*. A full picture would need a series of county surveys written by local historians who knew their local conditions and sources. Even so, some thirty or forty hides can be dated approximately from information in the *Autobiography* alone.

The first of these are the three at Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire. A beautiful fifteenth-century building, mainly of stone, it is built round three sides of a courtyard and surrounded by a wide moat. Garnet was living here by the end of 1588, when Gerard and Oldcorne landed; and these three, together with Southwell and three others, used the main hide during a raid in October 1591.¹ This hole, a tunnel running the full length of the back wing, was originally the house sewer. Owen converted it to a hide by blocking and camouflaging the discharge to the moat and the loopholes which lit the tunnel, and then contriving an entrance through the hearth of the room above. This place and at least one of the others were used in

¹ John Gerard, pp. 41-3; *Narrative*, p. 282; Godfrey Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden*, pp. 183-92. The reasons for identifying the house as Baddesley Clinton are given by Squiers, *Secret Hiding Places*, pp. 28-34. This must be the incident referred to by Gerard when he says (*Narrative*, p. 183): "Myself have been one of the seven that have escaped that danger at one time in a secret place of his (Owen's) making."

1591,¹ and are most likely to have been built as soon as Garnet moved to Baddesley Clinton in 1588.

It was probably in the winter of 1589-90 that Little John first visited Hindlip Hall, Worcester. In 1589 Oldcorne converted Dorthy Habington, mistress of the house while her brother Thomas was imprisoned in the Tower for his part in the Babington Plot.² Gerard says that Oldcorne lived at Hindlip for sixteen years, which would mean he arrived there about the end of 1589, and he adds that Hindlip was the centre from which all other Worcestershire chaplaincies were founded. The house was pulled down early last century, but there are still descriptions of it shortly before demolition and detailed accounts of the great twelve-day search in 1606, when Owen himself was caught, together with his chief assistant Ralph Ashley and Fathers Garnet and Oldcorne. This search revealed:

Eleven secret corners and conveyances in the said house, all of them having books, Massing stuff and Popish trumpery in them, only two excepted which appeared to have been found on former searches. . . . Three secret places . . . were found in and about the chimneys, in one whereof two of the traitors (Garnet and Oldcorne) lay close concealed. These chimney conveyances being so strangely formed, having the entrances into them so curiously covered over with brick, mortared and made fast to planks of wood, and coloured black like the other parts of the chimney, that very diligent inquisition might well have passed by without throwing the least suspicion upon such unsuspecting places. And whereas divers funnels are usually made to chimneys according as they are combined together, and serve for necessary use in several rooms, so here were some that exceeded common expectation, seemingly outwardly fit for carrying forth smoke, but being further examined and seen into, their service was to no such purpose, but only to lend air and light downward into the concealments, where such as were enclosed in them at any time might be hidden.³

¹ Garnet mentions in a letter to Aquaviva, 17 March 1594, that the mistress of the house, Eleanor Brooksby, was hidden in another hide during this search, as she was of a nervous disposition: her sister Anne Vaux faced the pursuivants instead. Stonyhurst MSS., Anglia I, 73.

² John Gerard, pp. 44-5. Thomas was eventually released in 1593.

³ Harleian MSS. 360, f. 93. The full text has been published several times, as in Nash, *History of Worcestershire* (1784), I, pp. 585-7, and Allan Fea, *Secret Chambers and Hiding Places*, pp. 26-34. Other documents bearing on this search are in Foley IV, pp. 67-81; Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden*, pp. 333-39; and John Humphreys, *Studies in Worcestershire History*, pp. 72-8. These papers together give one of the most detailed accounts we have of any search.

Hindlip no longer stands, but there are several other houses in this region with hides which can be attributed to Owen with more or less likelihood: Coughton Court, Billesley Manor, Abbots Salford perhaps. But in two cases this attribution can be taken as certain. Since Hindlip was the first Jesuit centre in Worcestershire, these hides cannot be dated before 1590. But it is unlikely that they were built very long after, as the owners of the two houses in question had already been in trouble for recusancy and priest-harbours before Oldcorne ever appeared on the scene. They are Huddington Court and Harvington Hall.

Huddington is a half-timbered building of the late fifteenth century, surrounded by a moat. It was the home of Robert and Thomas Winter, who died for their share in the Gunpowder Plot; and here, on the night of 6 November 1605, thirty of the conspirators sat down to supper in the great parlour before their last desperate stand at Holbeach House. One hide opens into a room at the top of the house which is supposed to have been used as a chapel, the entrance being concealed by a detachable panel in the wainscot. The chamfering of the beams at the entrance, and the inner hide and bolt-hole, indicate Owen's work. The other hide is entered from an attic bedroom. Part of the apparently solid timber-and-plaster wall (including a substantial timber upright which appears to support the massive rafter above) pivots open to reveal a secret room twelve feet long, ten feet wide and seven feet high.

Harvington is a tall red brick building of the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, standing in a wide moat overhung by gloomy trees. Of all houses in England, it gives the closest impression of what Hindlip was like, for it contains no less than eight hiding places. Humphrey Pakington of Harvington was a "deare frynd"¹ of Thomas Habington of Hindlip, ten miles away. This, taken with the style of the hides themselves, is sufficient proof that Owen was at work here.

One of the hides seems at first sight to be nothing more than the orthodox hole-under-the-garderobe, built into the kitchen chimney-stack. But at the back of the chimney is a tall brick shaft which housed the kitchen spit-mechanism: a weight and pulley driving the spit through a cord. The hole through which the cord runs is just big enough for a man to squeeze through

¹ Habington, *Survey of Worcestershire* (Worcs. Historical Society), I, p. 149.

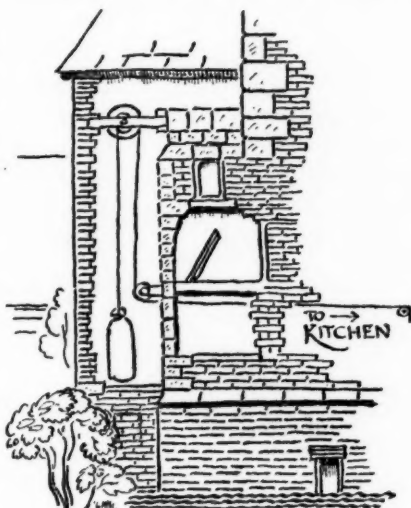
from the hide into the shaft beyond—which was the inner hide. It had a bolt-hole on to the moatside, camouflaged by bushes. The whole of this shaft was an afterthought to the original building; and there can be little doubt that it was designed by Owen to provide a space officially accounted for, which could yet be used as a priest-hole.

Part of the wainscot in the library could be moved, to reveal the studding of the brick and timber wall. One heavy upright beam is hung on a pivot and, on being pressed at the top, will swing outwards, leaving a gap through which a man can just squeeze.

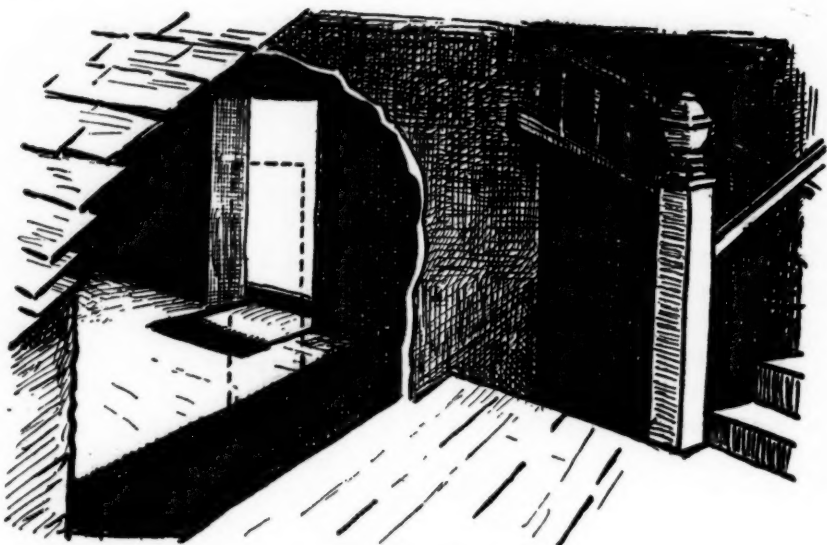
The room beyond is so cleverly sited that it does not show even on a measured drawing, such as that in the guide-book. In the room above is an ingenious "chimney conveyance," a solid-looking corner fireplace with a tiled hearth. It is an elaborate fake, complete even to smoke-blackening, built simply as a camouflaged bolt-hole into the attics. The "chimney" goes only as far as the ceiling, and was covered by two boards in a corner of the room above.

There are two hides in the roof. One is quite small, the other some sixteen feet square and seven feet to the apex. It was made by raising the ceiling below, thus forming a windowless space in the attics, which was sealed off from the rest of the roof by a false wall. Its entrance was along a catwalk in the apex of the long south-west gable. Since this catwalk itself had a secret door, of the frame and plaster type, it acted as an outer hide.¹

¹ A double roof hide, apparently entered through a panel of hinged plaster, is mentioned in Gerard's *Autobiography*. It was in London, at the house which he took in late summer 1598 and where John Lillie was arrested the following July. He says that "Immediately I got the lady's warning I opened the door of the room and as quietly as I could took a stool and climbed up into the hiding place, which was built in a secret gable of the roof. . . . But I could not open the door of the proper hiding place inside, and I would certainly have been found, if they had not taken John and, presuming he was a priest, given up the search." *John Gerard*, pp. 150-5. This account points to something on the lines of this hide at Harvington and the double hide at Huddington.



The Spit-shaft Hide, Harvington



Scotney Old Castle, Kent

The other double hide at Harvington is entered from the top of the great staircase. Two of the steps are hinged, and when raised reveal a small space, at the back of which is a square hole in the timbered wall. This was once covered by an inner secret door, remnants of whose hinges and iron bolt-socket are still on the jambs. Beyond is the inner hide, a space about six feet each way. In case the pursuivants pulled up the landing floorboards above the hide, a stout plaster ceiling was built so that under the floor was what one would expect: the ceiling of the room below.

There is a fine priest-hole at Scotney Old Castle, Kent. Here the outer hide is a small room under the tiles (entered through a frame-and-plaster door), at one side of which is a low door in a thick wall leading to another similar space. This once had a bolt-hole to the stairs above, and still has one to the ground floor through a disused chimney-flue. At the threshold of this second room part of the floor slides back, to reveal the inner hide, which is quarried out of the chimney-stack below.¹

During a search in 1598 Fr. Richard Blount and his servant Bray were enclosed in this hole for a week.² Blount came to

¹ I am indebted to Mrs. Louise Squiers for permission to use the diagram from her husband's book.

² First-hand accounts of this search and another later the same year are printed in John Morris, *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers, First Series* (1872), pp. 187-215.

Scotney in 1591, and the hole must have been built soon afterwards. Since Scotney was the first Jesuit house in Kent, and the hide shows all Owen's trademarks, being double, quarried out of a solid wall and provided with two bolt-holes, it is highly likely that he built it.

We now come to the only hide in England which can be dated exactly, the famous hole at Braddocks, Essex, in which Gerard survived a four-day search in April 1594. He says explicitly that Owen built it, and the spy John Frank fixes the date as Christmas 1592:¹

Item, he saith that Nicholas Owen, who was taken in bed with Mr. Gerard the Jesuit, was at Mr. Wiseman's house at Christmas was twelve months, and called by the name of Little John and Little Michael, and the cloak that he wore was Mr. Wiseman's cloak a year past, and was of sad green cloth with sleeves, caped with tawny velvet and little gold strips turning on the cape.

The hide is entered from the chapel, the usual long low room at the top of the house. Here Owen took up the tiles from the fireplace and constructed a false hearth. Beneath this he burrowed down into the solid brickwork of the chimney-stack. The hole he made adjoins the large dining room below, and is situated high up and slightly to the left of the clunch stone Renaissance fireplace. It was separated from this room only by lath-and-plaster covered with panelling.

During the last day of the search, the pursuivants pierced the plaster all round the room, except for the few feet behind which Gerard crouched. They began just to one side of the hide, worked all round the room until they were just to the other side, and then gave up. The night before, the two pikemen on guard in the chapel had felt cold and lit a fire on the false hearth. Before long the tiles, which had only wood beneath them, worked loose and a shower of sparks fell through. The guards noticed the loosened bricks and probing the cracks with a stick, found that the bottom of the hearth was made of wood. "At which," says Gerard, "I heard them remark what a curious thing it was, and thought that there and then they would smash open the hiding place and peer in . . ."²

I have crouched in this hide at night, with the false hearth closed above me and no light except one candle in the chapel.

¹ John Gerard, p. 64; SPD 248/103, printed in Morris, *The Condition of Catholics under James I* (preface to the Narrative), pp. xl-xliv. ² John Gerard, pp. 60-1.

Such an experience brings home the reality of the persecution more vividly than any document.

Close by is Sawston Hall, where there is another superb example of Owen's craftsmanship.¹ In the courtyard is a stone turret containing a newel stair which runs from ground floor to attics. At the top is a small landing made of a single layer of oak boards. Under the slope of the roof at the back of this landing, two of the boards can be lifted up together, revealing a dark hole in the stone wall on which their ends rest. It is contrived in the corner, where the circular inside and hexagonal outside walls of the turret sweep out from the flat wall of the Long Gallery, against which the turret is built. The hide itself is in the thickness of the Gallery wall, behind the panelling, and though eight feet six inches long and five feet high, is only twenty inches wide.

Mrs. Wiseman, who hid Gerard at Braddocks was a Huddleston of Sawston, and Gerard reconciled her brother Henry in 1592.² The Huddlestons had been recusants before that, but this was the first contact they had with Gerard, and consequently with Owen. Accordingly, the hole is not earlier than 1592, and may be dated as soon after that at Braddocks.

There is a large cluster of recusant houses in East Anglia, the result of Gerard's work between 1588 and 1594; so that Owen must have built many other hides in this region. There are remarkably fine hides at Oxburgh Hall and Snowre Hall in Norfolk, Melford Hall in Suffolk, and White Notley Hall in Essex. It may be a pointer that Oxburgh and Melford were both Jesuit houses, and White Notley belonged to Lord Vaux of Harrowden. But one cannot ascribe hides to Owen simply on the grounds that they are good ones: in this article I have only described examples which not only show Little John's trademarks, but also have documentary evidence to connect them with one of the principal Jesuits.

In 1599 a raid was made on Ufton Court, Berkshire, on a warrant for the apprehension of "one Jarrett a Jesuit escaped from the Tower of London and one Garrett, two notorious traitors," in other words, Gerard and Garnet.³ Four hides can be seen at

¹ Altogether, three hides at Sawston are known, but two of them were only found in 1959: investigations into them are still in progress, and it is not possible to publish an account yet.

² *John Gerard*, p. 33.

³ Miss A. M. Sharp, *A History of Ufton Court*, pp. 98-104.

Ufton. Two are irregular spaces under the tiles sealed off by false walls, and entered through hinged panels of lath-and-plaster. They appear to be the "cocke-loftes or some other secrett corner of the house" mentioned in a spy's report of 1586.¹ If so, they are slightly too early to be Owen's work. The other two are smuggled down among the flues of chimney-stacks on the first floor. They are, or were originally, both double, and one seems to have had a bolt-hole down to the cellars and thence out under the back terrace. One was found during the 1599 search, which gives a limiting date. It has been suggested that Owen worked here, but of this I am rather doubtful. The hides are fitted with automatic bolts, held shut by wooden springs,² a device which occurs (in an improved form) at Mapledurham House, seven miles away, but nowhere else that I know of.

Several houses connected with Gerard's work in Northamptonshire and the surrounding shires from 1598 to 1605 have hides. Drayton House, six miles north-east of Harrowden, was the home of Lord Mordaunt, and his children's tutor, Tutfield, had previously held that post at Harrowden.³ Nevill Holt Hall, twelve miles north, was let as a chaplaincy by the Nevills in or about 1600.⁴ There is a priest-hole at Drayton and three at Nevill Holt, all of them fine specimens.

In 1600 Gerard reconciled Sir Everard Digby of Stoke Dry, Rutland, and Gayhurst, Bucks. The house at Stoke Dry no longer stands,⁵ but Gayhurst remains and until about 1875 contained a hide entered through a movable section of flooring which revolved on a pivot and had a secret bolt. This hide had several doors and bolt-holes and was lit by the bottom section of a mullioned window, most of which served an ordinary room. This device can be seen both at Drayton and at Nevill Holt, and it may be more than a curious coincidence that these three houses, associated with Gerard in the same year, should all employ this unusual trick in their priest-holes. In any case, one must admire the audacity of the designer who realised that an excellent way of concealing a hide is to make one wall of glass.

Thrumpton Hall, Nottinghamshire, has a good double hide:

¹ SPD 193/17. An account of the ensuing search is in the same volume, no. 45. ² Illustrated in Squiers, p. 96. ³ Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden*, p. 244.

⁴ Squiers, pp. 54-7.

⁵ Though another Rutland house of Sir Everard's, North Luffenham Hall, has survived and would be well worth searching.

a secret staircase, with a trapdoor at the bottom covering an inner hide quarried out of the cellar wall below. Fr. Garnet is said to have been concealed in this house,¹ and the hole certainly has the Owen touch. There is, however, some dispute over the date of the present building, and the hide cannot be attributed to Owen for certain, though it seems highly likely.²

There is another good hide at Clopton House, Stratford-on-Avon, which was only found in 1958. It is under the stairs up to the chapel, which itself once had a secret door. The two walls enclosing it are built with a finish, so as to look like the inside of the main wall of the house. What they really do is cut a long garret into three, the small centre section of which forms the hide. The entrance is through two boards on the landing.

Now it had been suggested, before this hide was found, that Owen worked here, because Ambrose Rookwood rented the house from Lord Carew at Michaelmas 1605, as a convenient base for the Gunpowder Plot. If so, the hide could be dated exactly to October 1605. But it may well have been made before: Lord Carew was ostensibly a Protestant, but that proves nothing; hides are not uncommon in the houses of Church Papists. There is, for instance, a hole-under-the-garderobe-floor at Cleve Prior Manor close by, which was at this time owned by Sir Edward Bushell, a cousin of the Winters of Huddington. He does not seem to have been prosecuted for recusancy, and therefore local historians have written him down as a Protestant. But his true sympathies come out in a report on Clopton after the Plot, which lists among frequenters of the house "wth M^r Ambrous Rucwod . . . Se^r Edward bushell, m^r Robeart Catesbee with diuers others which I can not nam unto youer honer."³

There must have been very many other hides of Owen's building, and there were other builders at work. Apart from Little John's colleagues whom we meet in Gerard's *Autobiography*, John Lillie, Ralph Ashley, Hugh Sheldon, there was Fr. Richard Holtby in the North, and others who seem to have worked more or less independently. One was "an old man named Greene, a

¹ This is apparently a family tradition and I have not been able to discover the date when Garnet used the house.

² The hide is described in detail by Squiers, pp. 81-3. The date of the present Hall is discussed by Arthur Oswald in *Country Life*, 21-8, May 1959.

³ Gunpowder Plot Book I, 12: printed in H. H. Spink, *The Gunpowder Plot* (1902), pp. 302-3. Cf. Hugh Ross Williamson, *The Gunpowder Plot*, p. 151.

carpenter and mason," who occurs in a spy's report of 1595 on "Seminaries and ther Receyvers" in Northampton and Derbyshire.¹ "Hee made a secret place in Mr. Bentley's house at Lea, with a doore of free stone, that no man could ever judge there were any such place, and he makes all the secrett places in recusants' houses in that countrey."

Another was "one Badger, a mason living in St. Peter's in the East" at Oxford. According to Anthony à Wood, William Napier of Holywell Manor, Oxford, leased a farm at Cowley to this man, "who built a house thereon, about the latter end of Queen Elizabeth, for a hiding hole of a priest or any other lay Catholic in times of persecution."² In 1956 I discovered a hide in the roof at Holywell, which I believe to be Badger's work.³ and there are probably more of his holes waiting to be found. Holywell was the home of the martyr George Napier (hanged and quartered at Oxford in 1610) and he must have used this hide.

Most of what has been written about recusant manor houses has been vertical: concerned with the descent of one family. Much less is known about how the network of Catholic centres was extended horizontally. Each house has been considered by itself, out of context. The Roman invasion can be mapped by camps and baths, the Norman infiltration of Wales by castles. In the same way, it might be possible to chart the Catholic resistance by priest-holes. They are, after all, the main archaeological evidence of it. At present, it is mainly a matter of dating hides by documents, but if a sufficiently accurate typology could be built up, it might be possible to work the other way round: to use hides to fix the date when a given recusant house became a chaplaincy. In any case, the study of the way these places were made and used cannot fail to give a more vivid picture of what life under the persecution was like.

In conclusion, an appeal. Newly discovered priest-holes are not easy things to keep track of. Fresh ones turn up every few months, and many are not published. Would anyone who knows of a hide not mentioned in Mr. Squiers' book, please let me know?

¹ SPD 251/14; printed in Foley V, pp. 470-1.

² Anthony à Wood, *Life and Times* (Oxford Historical Society), III, p. 122.

³ For a description and diagram, see *The Venerable*, November 1959.

THE POPULATION EXPLOSION

A Theological Approach

By

S. Z. YOUNG

“**W**HAT IS THIS MORALITY, which condemns millions of children to poverty and destitution?” The question comes from an Indian ambassador to the United States, and it was quoted by Lord Casey in the Lords’ Debate on regulation of birth and world peace (28 June 1961). The Catholic peers who took part obviously felt that it was not the time and place to expound the moral theology of birth control, and they are the best judges of this. It is, however, striking that both Lord Brabazon of Tara, who opened the debate, and Baroness Summer-skill, who made one of the most interesting speeches, would clearly have welcomed some explanation of *why* Catholics hold to their increasingly lonely position. And this interchange between peers seeking an explanation, and other, Catholic, peers politely and reasonably declining to give one and referring them elsewhere is a microcosm—if that is a permissible way to talk about the House of Lords—of the situation of Catholics throughout the country when this question arises.

Of course on many occasions it just has to be understood on all sides that practising Catholics will not use contraceptives, and that, though they may not be able or willing to explain why not, it is waste of time trying to talk them into it. From the other viewpoint Catholics know that however cogent their exposition of natural law, there is almost no chance of persuading anyone of their rightness on this one point, considered in isolation from their whole religion. In practice a man will only come to agree with the Church’s interpretation of natural law if he is himself moving towards Catholicism.

Nonetheless there is a real desire for explanation of Catholic beliefs, and the practical problems might well be somewhat eased if Catholics were less nervous about giving it. For instance, a major problem in giving medical advice on birth control to Catholics, is that it is difficult for non-Catholic doctors to feel that Catholics seriously believe what they say. A non-Catholic doctor may not be disposed to make a wholehearted attempt to instruct a Catholic in a disputable method of birth regulation if he feels that his patient could probably be persuaded to use the more generally accepted methods. This situation could recur on a much larger scale, with a government calculating that an official contraceptive policy might provoke protest from Catholics at first, but that the grounds for their prejudice were really so shaky that eventually most of them could be won over.

An example of the ease with which too much reticence by Catholics as a whole can lead to misunderstanding was given in this debate when Baroness Summerskill spoke of birth control as "no longer a matter which divides the Churches" because the former Archbishop of Canterbury had said that "in principle he and the head of the Church of Rome were in agreement on the subject." Lord Longford very firmly countered this, pointing out that though all may agree that births should be regulated, Catholics held artificial methods of birth control to be "shameful and intrinsically vicious," in the words of Pius XI, and this is a very important difference between them and most non-Catholic Christians.

Not only is it important then that Catholics should become more articulate about birth regulation, as it appears in the light of their religion, but this is actually more important than trying physically to check the spread of contraception. Of course Catholics cannot co-operate in sinful acts, and this applies also to Catholic governments. But most efforts directly to impede the spread of contraception are bound to fail quite soon and to arouse fierce hostility out of all proportion to any good achieved. It is not a question of doing what is right despite unpopularity, but of trying to force others to do right by means which are doomed to failure and which will stiffen their resistance to the Church's teaching as a whole.

Recent enquiries show that present-day motives for contraception, both by private choice and with official encouragement,

are so strong that Catholics cannot do more, on the social and political level, than fight a bitter delaying action.

Population statistics are notoriously unreliable, and the most important figures for population policy are those of *predicted* population which of course are much more unreliable. But certain giant features of the demographic landscape do loom through the statistical fog. World population has grown by about 1,000 million since 1900. In 1957 it was estimated at 2,700 million, and if this is correct, it should now be rapidly approaching 3,000 million. The United Nations report on *The Future Growth of World Population* (1958) says "... it took 200,000 years for the world's human population to reach 2,500 million, it will now take a mere thirty years to add another 2,000 million." The Minister of Science and Leader of the House, Lord Hailsham, who in the debate was very cautious about population statistics and predictions, said he would be astonished if by A.D. 2000 there were less than 5,000 million people in the world, and thought there would probably be about 6,000 million.

Catholics know that they must never abandon natural morality. They are therefore predisposed to expect that mankind can deal with this unprecedented acceleration of population growth and its resultant problems by lawful means. Some have argued that the present rate of increase will eventually greatly slow down of its own accord, without widespread planning. Much as I hope they are right, as a layman I cannot see how this is to happen. The present growth is almost entirely due to falling death rates, owing to the victories of medical science over the greatest "Malthusian check"—namely disease. Hitherto world population has increased comparatively slowly because, although many children were born, many fewer survived to have children of their own. Only a very high birth rate made it possible for men to maintain, let alone increase, their numbers. But now medical science can ensure that nearly everyone survives into and usually right through their fertile years, and that their children will survive in their turn. This means that population is beginning to increase by geometrical progression—in other words, to explode. It is therefore not unreasonable to fear that with the removal of one of Malthus's checks on population growth, disease, the other two, famine and war—the latter once the least, now potentially

the most, formidable of the three—will operate *unless* the birth rate is reduced. And this means deliberate regulation.

But hard though it may be to deny that one day colossal numbers of people will face these terrible problems, this remains a prediction in a field in which predictions are known to be highly fallible. Catholics are on firmer ground, however, in joining with others to press for measures to improve food supplies in the immediate future. This must be done whatever else may be done about birth regulation. There is room for enormous improvements in food distribution, in more intensive and scientific agriculture, in drawing on the resources of the sea, and in development of underpopulated areas.

Nevertheless these measures, though in themselves useful and valid, are *irrelevant to the population policies of the underdeveloped countries today*. Their problem is that their population is increasing faster than food and other basic production. It is not a question of turning an increase into a decline—it is most doubtful if public opinion in any country really wishes that, and in any case it would almost certainly be impossible to achieve this by contraception. It is not even a question of stopping the increase—that is probably impossible also. What many underdeveloped countries are seeking, notably India and Pakistan, is a *brake* on population, which will bring its rate of increase below that of essential production, and will thus make possible industrial development and improvement of the pitifully low living standards of their people.

I have heard it said by Professor Colin Clark that only by allowing population growth to continue will India, for example, be able to industrialise and develop as England did in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I certainly am not qualified to argue with this formidable demographer. Some objections to this view do however seem obvious. In England there was first industrial development, then the cutting of the death rate by medical science, and finally, lagging rather behind, the spread of contraception. On the other hand countries like India are feeling the effects of a falling death rate before industrial development. The consequent unchecked population increase is in fact, they claim, hampering industrial development, and they are trying to counteract this by introducing contraceptives. The effectiveness of contraceptives in checking population is of course hard to

demonstrate scientifically. Nonetheless it does seem certain that they have played a very large part in finally stabilising the population increase in England, where its transitional effects moreover were mitigated to a greater extent than in India by a preceding and accompanying industrial expansion.

Catholics have therefore to accept that however controversial the demographic situation may be, the basic fact remains that there are irresistible motives for the peoples of many countries to try to check their population growth, and for their governments to encourage them to do so. Obviously they will seek the most effective methods. Lord Longford questioned whether government propaganda for any method would have much effect in many places, and Lord Hailsham seemed to agree that it was doubtful. But the attempt will certainly be made.

A further painful blow that must be absorbed by Catholics is that it seems most unlikely that natural and permissible methods of birth control will receive much support. No University graduate who has grappled with the mathematics in the Family Planning Association's sensible booklet on the safe period can imagine this method catching on among illiterates. Another point, made by Lord Taylor, is that in some countries anaemia, due to hookworm, causes a rhythm in most women too irregular to be used for birth regulation.

The conclusion that emerges from this debate, considered as typical of those going on at all levels, is that the praiseworthy effort to find common ground can intensify mutual misunderstanding. Non-Catholics may disagree about the effectiveness of contraception, even about its desirability. But that in some circumstances it is morally allowable is a near-universal belief in this country which has spread to individual Catholics—perhaps we should be surprised to discover how many. It would be unrealistic to expect much non-Catholic sympathy for protests against public contraceptive propaganda, as if Catholic moral objections were still widespread.

Of course we should be on the attack, not cynically indifferent. But the Catholic attack should be directed against the real position. And this position is rooted at a deeper level than that of demography, or psychology, or even of what we usually mean by morals. If we pin our faith to disputable demographic arguments we confirm people in their belief that the problem is

essentially demographic. This means that even if circumstances are at present as our more optimistic demographers claim, were these circumstances to change for the worse we might reasonably change our stand on contraception.

Several speakers in the Lords approached the matter on a profounder, a psychological, level. They stressed the value of sexual self-control. It is certainly true that the common sacrifice involved in using the safe period method can bring a husband and wife closer together. But this is a frequent by-product rather than a main advantage of, or motive for, the rhythm method. Although for many couples natural birth regulation may be a positive element in their marriage, in others it can set up very dangerous strains, either because of the spacing of sex relations, or because of the absolute reduction in their frequency, or quite likely because the whole idea of calculating and dating in this matter is distressing. Few features of the public image of the Church are more chilling and repellent to non-Catholics than the impression sometimes given that Catholics regard sex as unimportant or sexual abstinence as easy.

Catholics are left then with the moral duty to uphold the integrity of sexuality. Clearly if contraception breaks the natural law we should be able to engage with the non-Catholic mind on this question, and particularly with theist and Christian minds. Our failure here is notorious. "... difficult to understand them," says Lord Brabazon of Tara; "tenuous theological distinctions drawn between one method of birth control and another," says Baroness Summerskill; and without doubt they speak for most non-Catholics.

It could be that the explanation for this situation is theological rather than moral. After all, our view of sexual integrity requires a certain quality of belief in God. The Catholic sees all things as held in being at every instant by God, and therefore as confronting Him, being filled by His presence from moment to moment. When a Catholic speaks of the nature of a being, including a human being, he means those potentialities implanted in it by God in and by the very act of holding it in existence. What the Catholic does, therefore, he does in the immediate presence of God, and it is imaginatively comparatively easy for him to refer his acts to what he knows of God's purpose for him and them. He can ask, is this sexual act what God intends here and now?

Is it for this that God is holding me, including my sexuality, and my wife, including her sexuality, in being at this moment? I am not suggesting that a Catholic often thinks like this; but the Catholic view of God and creation does make such an attitude psychologically possible.

God is *not only* totally other, totally remote, but *also* totally present in His Creation as the cause of its existence. Created things are infinitely different from God, and yet really reflect His goodness. It is the Church's emphasis on this which alone can make the "tenuous distinctions" of moral theologians come alive in people's minds and determine their conduct.

A man who does not believe in God will not believe in the existence of a "human nature" as Catholics conceive it. For him, "human beings" are defined, not by God's common purpose for them, but by their common similarities to each other and common differences from other objects. For him there is no reason why any action should be regarded as absolutely unnatural, because there is no absolute human condition.

It is however not only unbelievers who cannot see the validity of Catholic teaching about natural law. Theists and Christians also more and more hold that contraception is both permissible and a duty for some people. Traditional Protestant theology, stressing the otherness of God, and the radical corruption of nature, rejects the whole idea of natural law. But more common among non-Catholic Christians is a certain attenuation of the awareness of God's presence as creator. God is thought of as an almighty, but remote, *ally* of men. It is not the will of God for human sexuality at every moment that is the ideal rule of conduct; it is a human purpose for sexuality, noble and humane as far as it goes, which is then attributed to God, as the friend of men.

The question becomes, not—does mechanical interference with this sexual act accord with God's purpose in holding these two people in existence at this moment? but—are these people's motives for introducing a contraceptive good ones in the context of their lives? When, so to say, the matter is referred to God to be judged by Him at an infinite height above this event, will He *agree* with their view of the situation? But this is to ask God to put Himself in the place men are making for themselves, rather than putting themselves in the place He wills for men. It is in this atmosphere that distinguished non-Catholic Christians can

classify intercourse with contraceptives and intercourse restricted to the infertile period, to Catholics intrinsically different acts, as merely different means to a common end.

The Catholic arguments against contraception fail to impress the non-Catholic mind, not because they are fallacious, but because they presuppose a special awareness of human dependence on God. It is then no mere surrender to abandon the attempt to argue this matter in isolation—though argued it must be—and to regard our views on this as secondary to the Catholic views of God and creation, which must be explained first. Even where at first glance our views seem to be shared, and indeed to be held by some Christians with a depth and sincerity that puts Catholics to shame, it is a mistake to assume they are held in just that way which enables Catholics to see how the Church's interpretation of natural law flows from them.

We should not regard false views on birth regulation among other Christians as simply logical anomalies, secondary hindrances to full acceptance of the truth, to be straightened out by argument. We should consider that they may be symptoms of a deeper inadequacy of belief in God as creator. And if this is so, then the best hope of winning sympathy for our concept of sexuality is to talk not so much directly about the problems this poses, as about its real source: the full Catholic insight into the relation between God and man.

DENYS THE CARTHUSIAN

By

ANSELM STOELLEN

DENYS THE CARTHUSIAN was born in 1402 or 1403 in the village of Rijkel, in the Flemish north-east of Belgium. After attending the nearby abbey-school of Sint Truiden (St. Trond), he completed his studies at Zwolle, c. 1416-21, where the daily spiritual influence of the practical *devotio moderna* did not quench but rather encouraged an already growing desire for recollection and interior prayer. In 1421 we find him, still too young for the Carthusian life, studying *in via Thomae* at the university of Cologne, taking a Master's degree in 1424, and, even more important, finally conquering a violent moral crisis which echoes in his writings in many expressions of unaffected humility. In 1424 or 1425 he became a Carthusian at Roermond, where he died on 12 March 1471.

During all these forty-six years he lived the quiet, regular life of a Carthusian, enjoying the solitude of his cell and leaving it, as a rule, only three times a day, for matins, mass and vespers. His early biographers tell us that "according to the rigour of the old rule" he did not take any sleep or rest after matins, but saved that time for study and prayer. This could be misunderstood. Following the introduction, at the end of the twelfth century, of the daily conventual mass, and, towards the end of the thirteenth century, of the daily individual low masses, Carthusian life at the beginning of the fifteenth century differed from both the old and modern observances in one important point. In order to ease the strain of the long uninterrupted series of offices, an hour's rest after lauds and before prime and conventual mass was permitted. Since, at this time, the "midnight" office had not yet been adopted by the Carthusians, the period of sleep before matins was still by far the longer. Denys, therefore, did not, as has too readily been assumed, regularly give up half of his sleep; he merely did not avail himself of the recent permission with which his robust constitution could dispense. "My head is

of iron, and my stomach of brass," he used to say when his friends expressed concern about his diet. And they had good reason to do so: he liked his game very high—but that game, of course, was fish—and as to his vegetables, he was not put off his food by conditions, dwelt upon with some relish by his biographers, which would have ruined the appetite of others.

Denys had to sacrifice the quiet regularity of his Carthusian life only during three relatively short periods. First, when, as procurator, he had charge of the temporal administration of the house and of the spiritual direction of the lay brothers. This happened, not about 1458, as has generally been supposed, but while Denys, as a young priest, was writing one of his books on the praises of Our Lady, about 1433. We are not told how things and people fared under his providence; we can only make a good guess from the reputation he made as a great despiser of money, *maximus pecuniae aspernator*, and from the exuberant hymn of thanksgiving with which he celebrated his release. Some eighteen years later, from September 1451 to March 1452, the Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa insisted on taking Denys with him on his reform visitation, as a papal legate, through the Rhineland and the Low Countries. Finally, in 1465, Denys was chosen as one of the little band sent out to start the foundation of 's Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc), which he governed from 1466 to 1469, when failing health forced him to resign. In 1458 he played an important part in the reconciliation of the Duke of Guelders with his son. But nothing in the documents supports the assumption that Denys was the procurator of Roermond who, on that occasion, went to see the Duke and made him agree to an interview with his son. The role of Denys was purely spiritual. He prayed and received through an angel a message from God which he transmitted to the two parties. Henceforth he was known as "the man who speaks with the angels."

His literary activity began about 1430, with a treatise on recollection during office in choir. His last work, on meditation, was written in 1469 after his return to Roermond. Leaving aside the three interruptions mentioned above, during which his literary output would have lessened considerably, we can say that he had at least thirty-two years for quiet and regular work. If we take into account the very simple nature of many of his writings there seems, therefore, to be little need to speak with some of

his biographers of a great miracle, *ingens miraculum*. At the same time, the catalogue of his writings is most impressive;¹ and as he became more widely known as a man of learning and a spiritual director of repute, his correspondence, often with very important personages, ecclesiastical and lay, steadily increased to alarming proportions. Hence the question arises: how could such activity fit within the framework of a purely contemplative life?

On this subject Denys has expressed his mind repeatedly and clearly:

Considering how divine, salutary and meritorious it is to teach, exhort, redress, convert and save others by one's preaching, and because by the kind of religious life I have professed I cannot leave the enclosure and do not possess the privileges required for preaching, the less I can do these things by word of mouth, the more I wish to do them by writing, correcting and dictating. . . . It is true that the purely contemplative life has greater dignity and stability than the purely active one. But a way of life which includes both contemplation and action is the highest of all, provided that the activities we choose are such as presuppose the perfection of the contemplative life and are the fruit of the plenitude of contemplation. . . . Even our own Carthusian statutes make this perfectly clear.

Denys was right when he appealed to the statutes. Whereas St. Benedict underlines only one aspect of work in the life of the monk, namely, its ascetical importance—idleness is the enemy of the soul—Guigo I, author of the fundamental Statutes or *Consuetudines* of the Carthusians, c. IIII6–20 (?), impresses upon his religious the duty of working in a spirit of devotion to the Church: "*Dei verbum manibus praedicemus*, Let us preach the word of God by our hands. With every book we write, we produce in our place a preacher of the truth." Pius XII, only five years ago, in a letter to the Prior of the Charterhouse of Vedana, gave the same directives. Apostolic prayer, penance and contemplation, undoubtedly. But that is not all. The old monastic maxim, *Ora et labora*, and the motto of St. Thomas, *Contemplata tradere*, apply just as well to the Carthusian. By the example of his virtues, but also by his literary productivity, *studiorum vestrorum commentationes*, he must contribute his share to help his fellowmen.

¹ The works of Denys in the modern edition (Montrieux-Tournai-Parkminster, 1896–1935) extend to forty-two large volumes, with two volumes of *Indexes*.

The literary contribution of Denys was exegetical and theological, as well as ascetical and mystical. The catalogue of his works includes more than a hundred items. We find first a full Commentary on Sacred Scripture, written between 1434 and 1440 and between 1452 and 1457.¹

Next in importance we have, c. 1459-64, a *Collectarium* (usually called *Commentarium*) of extracts from the medieval commentators on the "Books of Sentences" of Peter Lombard. The personal remarks added by Denys show his intellectual independence. Yet he seldom abandons the *Doctor Sanctus*, as he calls St. Thomas, on a point of real importance, and it is only by misreading the facts that it has been possible to describe him as a Thomist converted to Albertinism. Further, among the longer works, we meet a complete set of sermons for seculars and religious, c. 1452; commentaries on the works of the Areopagite, c. 1465-67, on the *Scala Paradisi*, c. 1453, and on the *De consolazione philosophiae* of Boethius, c. 1465; a revision of the *Instituta* and the *Collationes* of Cassian, c. 1450; and a *Summa fidei orthodoxae*, c. 1468, which is nothing more than a summary of the *Summa theologica* of St. Thomas.

Amongst his most important *opuscula* is his treatise, written c. 1430, on the gifts of the Holy Ghost (the gift of wisdom plays a prominent part in the mystical doctrine of Denys) and two works on Our Lady, which both comprise several chapters on the special graces of contemplation of Mary, but fall short of a clear acknowledgment of her Immaculate Conception.² We may also mention two works on the Carthusian life, c. 1435-40 and c. 1455-1460, the first of which was unjustifiably quoted by Fénelon in defence of his Explanation of the Maxims of the Saints; three books on the authority of the Roman Pontiff, c. 1440-47 and c. 1465, which were quoted as a vindication of Bossuet's Defence of Gallicanism, but wherein Denys professes the subordination

¹ In 1440 or 1441 Denys wrote his *Protestatio*, explaining to his Superiors the spirit in which he had undertaken his work on Sacred Scripture, and asking to be permitted to finish the work. The long interruption in this work may have been due to the fact that Denys was under a cloud at this time. The general chapter of 1446 refers to some unspecified abuses and transgressions committed by Denys and another monk.

² On this issue, Denys was not prepared to abandon the fundamental positions of many of the great scholastics until, in his work on the Sentences, he finally bowed to the authority of a decree passed some twenty years before, in 1439, by the pseudo-council of Basel.

of the Pope to the general council only in very extraordinary circumstances, at the same time, however, attributing the privilege of infallibility not to the Pope personally but to the Church. Like Bridget of Sweden and Catherine of Siena, Denys was favoured with visions referring to the imminent punishment of the Church. These are recorded in an appendix to his letter to Catholic princes, 1454. Some twenty other writings of his deal with the reformation of the Church on all its various levels, ecclesiastical and social. One of these writings was addressed, in 1467, to Isabella of Portugal, widow of Philip the Good. Denys's treatise on the last things (c. 1455-60) was a favourite book of Leo XIII—a work viewed with suspicion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the inquisition in Spain and Italy. Denys had not been satisfied merely to repeat with approval the famous vision of Purgatory by the Monk of Eynsham; he had extended to the souls of all those who were responsible for the sins of others the punishment of remaining uncertain in Purgatory about their eternal salvation, a psychological torture which theologians are not prepared to admit in more than a very few exceptional cases.

The treatise on Contemplation, c. 1440-45, deserves a special mention. It was not one of his popular works, but its substance passed into one of the most widely read of his minor writings the *De Fonte lucis*, c. 1455. The *De contemplatione* was first published in 1534, and never had a second edition until it was reprinted by the Order, together with several other of the spiritual writings, in 1894. This treatise gives the most comprehensive outline of Denys's views on the mystical experience.

Denys has been called the Ecstatic Doctor, *Doctor Ecstaticus*. His early biographers tell us that he had many ecstatic experiences which not infrequently lasted several hours. He himself has described some of his visions and ecstasies: one series of three, during the office of matins on 23 December in the successive years 1441-3, referring to the state of the soul of a deceased priest buried in the choir of the Roermond charterhouse; another series of three, during conventual mass on the feast of the Purification, 2 February 1454, on Passion Sunday, 22 March 1461, and on the third Sunday after the octave of Easter, 3 May of the same year, referring to the fall of Constantinople and the evils of the

Church; finally, during the night before Epiphany, 1458, the vision of an angel which has been mentioned above.

The first two experiences of the first series were visions which Denys saw, fully awake, with his bodily eyes, but which remained invisible to his neighbour; the third was of a purely intellectual nature, with such complete alienation of senses as he had seldom experienced before: "I could not open my eyes, I could not say the psalms, I could not stand upon my feet." We are not told how long this ecstasy lasted. The second series of ecstasies seems to mark a progress upon the first: all three were purely intellectual experiences in the way now usual to him, *more sibi solito*. The first two consisted of a mental dialogue which took place between God and the soul. Denys says that they lasted the whole length of the conventual mass. He adds that regaining consciousness was a very painful process, and that the whole experience of the expression of the divine wrath against the corruption of the Church left him so depressed and weak that he could not take his meal before the evening.

Denys's earliest biographer, Peter Dorlandus, a Carthusian monk of Diest, who died in 1507, quoting from what seems to have been a written account of revelations, tells us that Denys, like Eliseus, had frequent musical ecstasies. Some special occasions are mentioned: one in 1469 in the church of 's Hertogenbosch, provoked by the playing of the organ; two more, without date, one induced by the singing of the Carthusian *Veni sancte Spiritus* at the ceremony of a novice being conducted to his cell; the other by the anthem *Suscepimus Deus misericordiam tuam*, which must have been the Introit or the Gradual of the feast of Candlemas. From the same source, and from an answer of Denys to his closest assistant, Dom Charles of Herck, we learn also that Denys had many visions of deceased souls and many a tussle with the devils.

Denys knew that the revelations he received and the ecstatic phenomena which accompanied them were not necessarily connected with sanctifying grace. They were *gratiae gratis datae*, intended directly for the spiritual benefit of others. But he attached great value, both religious and apologetic, to those ecstatic experiences which, according to the rules laid down in his treatise on the discernment of spirits,¹ were to be considered

¹ *De discretionem spirituum*, c. 1458.

as the natural condition of the essential mystical state; natural, that is, as a result of the weakness caused by the original fall of mankind. If human nature had not been affected by sin, it would have been able to stand up to the stresses caused by the mystical experience. This was the case with the Blessed Mother of Christ. In her, unitive experience did not upset the balance of natural activities, and she enjoyed it without any suspension of the normal operations of her physical and psychological faculties. With one notable exception, however. The beatific vision, the direct vision of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, which, according to Denys, was frequently granted to Our Lady during her life on earth, and also, at least once, to Moses and St. Paul, perhaps to St. John, and possibly to some other saints, necessarily required the suspension of the normal conditions of the natural life. Denys does not explain how that suspension manifested itself outwardly. But for Denys the meaning of the word *ecstasy* was not restricted to the effect of certain modes of mystical experience on the senses and other natural faculties. For him, ecstasy meant above all the final stage in the invisible and ineffable meeting and union of the soul with God. The call to contemplation had come very precociously to Denys. In a Dialogue on the Passion, the Saviour reminds him of the early days of his vocation:

How often, when you were still a little boy and hardly capable of distinguishing between right and left, did I send you graces of internal visitation, of heavenly illumination, of loving fervour, of contemplative admiration, of hidden consolation, as you now recognise with wonder, more than in the past. Moreover, when you were hardly ten years old, I inspired you with that desire to enter the Order in which you now live. If it had been in your power, you would at once have fulfilled that aspiration. And for that I praise you. Indeed you cannot forget how often in the meantime, when you had been rebuked, you looked back with tears and sighs at the church of the convent as long as you could catch a glimpse of its tower. Yet, during that period of delay you committed serious sins, and you would have sinned much more grievously if I had not filled your heart with at least a servile fear, so strong that you came to regret that you could not sin without great apprehension and remorse. And now for so many years I have thus acted and still act with you, and I show myself to you, as you well know.

Unlike other great mystics, Denys has not left us a direct description of the privileged moments of his most intimate dealings with God. But if we approach the study of his doctrine on contemplation in a disposition less of theoretical curiosity than of religious sympathy, we soon realise that here we have the faithful echo of a deep personal conviction and the authentic resonance of an enthralling spiritual venture. The gradual development of the views of Denys on contemplation has been analysed elsewhere. Here we must limit ourselves to a general and synthetic description of the essential mystical experience as understood and lived by one of the most fervent admirers of the Pseudo-Areopagite. This disciple of Plotinus who, at the beginning of the sixth century, wrote under the name of the Athenian convert of St. Paul, thereby securing in mystical matters an unrivalled authority throughout the Middle Ages, had completely carried away the fifteenth-century Carthusian. Denys was convinced that the teaching of the Pseudo-Areopagite was a direct reflection of the experience of the Apostle when he was caught up to the third heaven. He gave to the doctrine of the Pseudo-Dionysius a more systematic, or perhaps we ought to say a more technical expression. It is, however, certain that in so doing, the Carthusian laid bare his own soul and its most intimate aspirations. Traditional teaching and personal experience are here fused into one harmonious and convincing unity of introspective theology at its best. For Denys, contemplation in the highest sense of the word (which, after his patron, he always calls mystical theology) is the exercise of the negative knowledge of God, by which a soul, in the heroic degree of love of God, with the help of the gift of wisdom, and stimulated by a special grace of illumination, is brought into unitive ecstasy.

The concepts of positive and negative theology—positive and negative knowledge of God—are in themselves, says Denys, purely philosophical. They have no necessary connection with the supernatural elevation of man, and may therefore be verified in the heathen or in the sinner, as well as in the saint. Negative theology supposes the positive which considers God as the infinitely perfect cause of all created perfection. It applies to him, in an absolutely exalted and pure degree, all the concepts which we borrow from our knowledge of creatures, either by our natural power of intelligence, or under the illuminating guidance

of faith; the only condition being that these concepts should not contain in themselves anything unworthy of God. At this stage we cannot yet speak of contemplation, except in a loose and analogous sense. Simple knowledge of God can very well exist without sanctifying grace. A theologian who lives a sinful life may possess such knowledge in an eminent degree. Still more, he may have received his knowledge, for the benefit of others, as a special gift from God. But even if we possess sanctifying grace with the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, our knowledge of God will remain cold and purely speculative until it belongs to us in an intimate, living, experimental way, as the children of God.

To transform and to sublimate in this way our knowledge of God is, in Denys's view, precisely the function of the gift of wisdom. When we are born anew of the Spirit, we receive in our soul a kind of superior, Christian instinct which allows us to appreciate and to savour,¹ in the things of the faith, the con-naturalness established by sanctifying grace between the soul and the supernatural world of God. It is the role of the gift of wisdom, or sapience, to develop the subtlety and the promptness of this new sensitiveness. When a soul who has acquired a certain proficiency in the ways of God, and is already on intimate loving terms with her creator, is visited by a special, actual grace of illumination, the soul, helped by the gift of wisdom, at once reacts with love and joy. The knowledge of God in that soul may be very imperfect from a purely scientific and abstract theological point of view, but the illuminative grace and the gift of wisdom impart to this knowledge a warmth and vitality of meaning which make it no longer merely speculative and theological, but truly religious. It is thus that this positive knowledge really becomes contemplation.

But it sometimes happens that a soul who has once tasted God finds that there is no lasting peace in this first adoration of her creator and saviour. No matter how much she mentally purifies the perfections of creatures in applying them to her Maker, she is uncomfortably aware of how far short they fall of the excellence and simplicity of the divine being. She is full of fear that, in spite of all her endeavours, anything created might defile the idea of God. She doubtless knows that the Cause, God, must in some way or other contain the effect, the created perfection. But the purity

¹ In Latin: *sapere*; hence: *sapientia*, better rendered by *sapience* than by *wisdom*.

of the divine truth compels her to turn aside from the contemplation of the divine perfection through the mirror of the created world. Stimulated yet again by illuminative graces, she turns to the "negative way." Whilst her reason says: "God is almighty, God is wise, God is good," the contemplative soul, with the help of the gift of wisdom, stammers out: "God is not almighty, God is not wise, God is not good. All these qualities have been borrowed from creatures, and then purified; but I shall never be able to purify them thoroughly enough to be applied to the infinitely perfect object of my love. God is . . ." And here the loving soul cannot go further. She remains buried as in a thick "cloud of unknowing." She is happy to rest thus impotent and silent, knowing very well that this impotence itself is the deepest and purest surrender of the creature to its God. Then the ineffable experience takes place. It is love that has brought the soul so far. And now if her love is sufficiently purified, from the bedrock of humility, love, not knowledge, shoots upwards, through the cloud, towards the perfect union with the infinite Being of the Beloved: "Love enters and penetrates where knowledge remains outside." But here all attempts at description must cease, because, as Denys insists, he alone can understand these things who has received them.

Denys knew that illusions are easy in this matter, and that it is only in exceptional cases that the authenticity of mystical experience can be recognised with certainty. He believed that it was not possible to say anything about the duration of mystical union, except that it is usually very short. He knew that, in this state itself, there are different degrees of perfection; but that none of these, not even the highest one, can bear any comparison with the immediate vision of God. He frequently emphasised that no degree of human holiness on earth could lay claim to the graces of contemplation; and that the soul may have reached the most eminent degree of perfection without receiving from God that special grace of illumination which would lead it to the mystical theology. He also says repeatedly that the grace of contemplation does not depend upon the natural endowments of man. A soul which, naturally speaking, might be described as ignorant and coarse, could just as well be elevated by God to the highest state of contemplation. Finally, he insists that usually the soul must prepare itself carefully for contemplative graces over a long period

of time. Yet, sometimes God does not wait, but takes a recently converted or still imperfect soul and helps it, or even as it were forces it to reach at once to the sublimest degree of mystical theology.

Denys's unqualified admiration for the Pseudo-Areopagite, and the experience of his own psychological temperament, have never allowed him to hesitate in expressing his preference for the negative contemplation, mystical theology, as compared with the positive contemplation, whose degrees, culminating in lofty consideration and loving adoration of the Blessed Trinity, are described in several of his works. At one time, in the period when he wrote the treatise on contemplation, he even went so far as to reserve the mystical theology exclusively to the superior, unitive way, assigning the positive contemplation to the relatively inferior, illuminative way. But in the end he dropped this forced and fallacious parallelism, realising no doubt that the pure, unitive love of God does not discriminate between the two ways of reaching the Beloved, as long as it finds its food and its inspiration in the essentially twofold approach of the human soul to the One Truth and Goodness.

Habent sua fata libelli. The first edition of the commentaries of Denys on the Gospels was dedicated, 14 March 1532, to Henry VIII. It has been suggested that this homage was inspired by the prior of the London Charterhouse, John Batmanson, whose letter to Denys's editor, Dirk Loer, vicar of the house of Cologne, was printed in the 1532 edition of the commentary on Acts. It is true that the prior and community of the London Charterhouse are recommended by name to Henry in the dedicatory letter of the Gospel commentary. But we must note that in the same year 1532 the *Opera minora* were dedicated to Clement VII and Charles V, and the *Contra perfidiam Mahometi* to Ferdinand of Austria. It was only natural that the "Defender of the Faith" should not be forgotten. We do not know whether the royal theologian ever cast his eye over the pages of the bulky volume. If he did, he may have been chagrined to discover that the unsuspecting Carthusian sought his patronage for an interpretation of Leviticus xx. 21 which knocked the bottom out of his claim against the validity of his marriage with his deceased brother's wife. The prohibition of Leviticus, says Denys, applies only as long as the brother lives, and becomes an order to marry the widow if the brother dies without issue.

Prior John Batmanson died in November 1531. The new prior, John Houghton, wrote to Dirk Loer on 13 July 1532, congratulating him on his edition of Denys and placing a substantial order for copies. Loer's grateful answer is dated 15 September 1532. More letters were exchanged, as we gather from the dedication to Thomas Cromwell, with which Loer, apparently still unaware of the approaching tragedy, prefaced the edition of Denys's commentaries on the Sapiential books. The date was 24 June 1533, ten days before the excommunication of Henry VIII by Clement VII. Once more the vicar of Cologne made it a point to recommend the new prior of the London Charterhouse and his community to Cromwell's benevolent patronage. In one of his letters to Dirk Loer, John Houghton had highly praised the Lord Chancellor for his kindness, and this praise was duly quoted. We know that Cromwell did not wait very long to change his attitude towards the saintly prior, who was hanged, drawn and quartered on 4 May 1535.¹

Neither in England nor on the continent were the works of Denys destined to play a direct role in the front line of the Reformation battle. New troops and new methods were needed for that purpose. But the providential part of Denys in that struggle was none the less an essential one. In an effort to stem the tide of moral deterioration and to prevent the disaster which he saw was threatening the whole of Christendom, he had, with true prophetic freedom, warned the princes, the clergy and the Pope, respectfully but unequivocally. He had instructed and advised the faithful, reprimanded and encouraged the religious, put his pen at the service of the missionaries in the field. When the storm finally broke over the Church, his place was on the home front, where his printed works prolonged his influence. God alone knows how much evil he was able to forestall, how much good to keep alive and bright. But we may recall that, before the end of the sixteenth century, his Gospel commentaries had seen nineteen editions, the epistles of St. Paul twenty, the rest of the New Testament seventeen, the Old Testament at least four, and the Psalms six. In the same period his Sermons were printed four times, and ten of his practical spiritual works from nine to thirteen times, with a record figure of twenty-seven editions for the treatise on the last

¹ Bl. John Houghton is one of the Forty Martyrs, whose cause for canonisation has recently been reassumed by decree of Pope John XXIII.

things. The life of the Church persists through the centuries without any break in continuity: the promises of her divine Founder pledge her immortality. But at decisive moments of her history the arteries carrying the vital flow of her apostolic tradition develop dangerous strains which threaten to become breaking points. Then God raises up the men whose vocation it is to strengthen the channels of the living truth, and to ensure that life continues to flow and to reach all the members of the Mystical Body.

THE LINCOLN MYTH

By

JOSEPH BLENKINSOPP

NOW THAT the opening of the American Civil War centenary has been officially announced, and the first shots have been fired at the gallant steamer *Star of the West*, there is certain to be a reconsideration of the great men who led both sides. Over the years five thousand volumes have been written on Lincoln, but perhaps there is still room for research into his position as America's national hero. Every society feels the need for a heroic figure, akin in many respects to the mythological figures of ancient civilisations. The cult of this figure gives a sense of historical continuity in the pursuit of a common cause with the hero, unites the society and serves as a focus for its aspirations. George Washington could perhaps have filled the role, but Lincoln's appeal was far stronger. After his death it was immediately obvious that he offered material for a heroic myth, as the negro sermon and the Rev. Billy Sunday's acrobatic panegyric show. I would suggest that the fascination we feel today for Lincoln and for the American Civil War, springs from the sense of an era which is so near us in time, and yet is genuinely mythopoeic.

At any rate, the idea lost no time in catching on. For both Jew and Negro he was America's suffering Messiah. Henry Ward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe and famous pulpit-puncher, said that "his life is now grafted on to the infinite"

where it would be fruitful as never before. Further afield, Tolstoy thought that he was "a Christ in miniature"; and indeed the coincidence of his murder on Good Friday was not lost on the preachers of that Easter week-end. His death in Ford's Theatre came at a time when on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line deep emotion had been aroused for the half-million killed in the Civil War. In this highly-charged atmosphere the news was at first greeted with shocked silence; a frenzied reaction followed, and rapidly the Lincoln myth sprang up. Soon people were filling in the lacunae: an ominous quotation from *Macbeth* a day or two before as he sailed up the Chesapeake; a double image seen in a mirror; a meaningful "Goodbye" instead of the customary "Good-night" to his personal bodyguard the previous evening. He shared with Julius Caesar the dark and minatory dreams and in addition had a vision of himself lying in state in the East Room of the White House. To carry the parallel still further, his wife also experienced a psychic warning of his murder.

It is a necessary part of the myth that the Great Man should die in public, and at the height of his powers. Here the myth was served by an assassin who had a flair for the dramatic. But it is interesting to see that the frenzied reaction at his murder seemed to have nothing directly to do with Lincoln's moral integrity. Citizens of Chicago in the Capone era showed the same hysterical fervour when they bought for a dollar apiece scraps of material dipped in the blood of a gangster who had been shot down by the police. The almost instinctive feeling that the dead man had become mediator of a transcending power is expressed by Walt Whitman, who witnessed the "horrible carnival" of Lincoln's whistle-stop funeral procession: and this intense emotion, a combination of sorrow and elation, seems to have been generally shared.

To an "outsider," a stranger within the society, or one who questioned the validity of its myth-making, this event did not carry the force and quasi-religious significance which Lincoln's murder had for many of his contemporaries. An interesting and not so well-known case of the outsider to the Lincoln myth is that of the English actress Ellen Kean, who was on tour in the States and found herself becalmed as a result of the assassination and its aftermath. She was the daughter-in-law of the great and erratic Edmund Kean (by coincidence the father of Lincoln's assassin, Junius Brutus Booth, was the double, stand-in and rival

of Edmund Kean up to his leaving England for the New World). Ellen Kean's letters from America have remained almost unnoticed. They were printed in a restricted edition of fifty copies, edited and introduced by John Drinkwater, the author of a play on Lincoln. Though they were evidently dashed off in some hurry, they give a detached impression of the hysterical scene which is of considerable interest. The letters help to communicate, in the words of the editor, "the thrill that comes across more than half a century from contact with one of the supreme tragic moments of the modern world."

The first letter giving the news that had struck the States numb with horror, was written to her daughter Mary from the Metropolitan Hotel, New York, and is dated Sunday—Easter Sunday—16 April. Ellen Kean, however, seems more disturbed by the fact that the tour could not, for the moment, go on. She speaks of the manner of the killing, though the facts had not by that time been properly sorted out, and seems genuinely sorry for Booth who, she says, had to be protected by the police from the angry crowds. In a later letter she also declares herself sorry for the other accomplices, who underwent a long and gruelling trial in Washington. One of these was a woman and a Catholic—a Mrs. Surratt, who kept a boarding house which had been the headquarters of the fantastic conspiracy. Despite the pity of many others besides Ellen Kean, she was hanged on 7 July, 1867. Her son, John, escaped to Canada where he lay low in a religious house and lived to die in his bed in 1916. There were two other Catholics among the conspirators and it was even claimed afterwards that John Wilkes Booth himself had been baptised and hired by the Jesuits to assassinate the President!

A second letter was written from Barnum's Hotel, Baltimore on 13 May, when things had settled down somewhat. Lincoln had been dead not quite a month (he had lingered till the morning of 15 April, Holy Saturday) and the public were beginning to get back to the normal rhythm of life. It had been a very full month, and Ellen Kean shows that she had an eye for colour and movement, as we should expect from one in her profession. But she does not seem to have had much sympathy for or imaginative insight into the people who took part in all the pageantry and ceremonies, most of which she witnessed, we may suppose, from the safety of the hotel window.

The houses, she noted, were decked out in black cloth and crêpe hangings, with "a good deal of inflated nonsense and bad grammar printed in black and on white hangings, sometimes covering half the building."

Three days later she was still in the doldrums at Baltimore and no arrangements had been made for the tour to continue. She certainly was not happy at the prospect of a protracted stay in a land where little seems to meet with her approval. She gives us her eavesdropped version of some of the talk and gossip of those hectic days:

Some of the negroes (like the Yankee's parrot) think 'tarnation deal upon these matters, and one of them told me that he had looked for a *parallel*¹ in the *Bible* and not finding it there, he had looked into ancient *history*, and as he couldn't get a solution of the matter by looking into the past, he concluded we must look into the future. It is amusing to hear them laying down the law to one another and using very grand words.

During these months, in response to a deeply felt but inadequately expressed need, a myth was rapidly growing up around the figure of the murdered President. It gathered force and an accumulation of legend which was sometimes completely at variance with the facts. The very few people who had known Lincoln intimately witnessed this development with apprehension and some disgust. Herndon, his former law-partner, did his best to dispel the more ill-informed rumours, but without success. He, like Ellen Kean, was an "outsider" to this highly subjective process of mythologising Lincoln, even though he knew the man far better than the myth-makers did.

In her letter from New York of Monday, 24 April, Ellen Kean tells her daughter about the funeral procession through Columbia—how they paraded "the poor wounded remains," how they had to puff out and touch up the sunken cheeks of the corpse with paint, to offset the effects of the warmth of those spring days. She found it incongruous that the people so obviously enjoyed the funeral procession: "The day was so fine, the women were so gaily dressed, such pinks and blues and yellows, such a display of roses and lilies and smiling faces, that it was impossible to realise the fact that it was a *funeral* procession."

Her letter of Saturday, 13 May, must have preceded an inactive

¹ Italics are hers throughout.

and doubtless exasperating week-end, for she wrote another long letter on the following Tuesday. Here she makes some more general reflections on what she had witnessed during the previous month. In the first place, it is clear where her sympathies lay.

The South is *crushed*, there is no doubt about that, their army was killed out by the never-ending supply of fresh men in the northern army. All the flower of the southern youth is under the sod, all that remains of them are lads, old men and broken-hearted women . . . the iron heel is on them and they will be trodden out of existence. All that sweet Plantation life is gone for ever.

Nothing of what she saw pleased her; everything conflicted with her "Victorian Englishwoman abroad" sense of propriety and decorum.

A day or two after leaving New York she gives us an instructive and amusing picture of life there a century ago—she was not unhappy to leave.

We are glad to get away from the noise and confusion of New York, away from the sight of more than twenty omnibusses at once within view of your window, away from monster stores where you get your pocket picked and cannot get served until you have waited half an hour, away from monster hotels where everything is brought cold to table and where your bell is never answered, where you get *no sleep* . . .

The people around her were not capable of living up to the great moment of history they were passing through; their boorishness and insensitivity made her shudder. Further on in this letter we read:

All is vanity, extravagance and heartless gaiety. I am told that while these dreadful trials are going on, that in Washington you hear nothing about it at all, no one talks of politics. Picnics, dances, and every possible light pleasure is going on. *I could find a parallel in history for this state of things.*

Where, exactly? Unfortunately she does not say. The negro at Baltimore with whom she had got into conversation, failing to find his in the Bible, turned to ancient history, but was no more successful there. Could she have had in mind what must have gone on "in the most high and palmy state of Rome a little ere the mightiest Julius fell"? The deaths of both men were surrounded, at first, with indescribable confusion. Both had had premonitory dreams and warnings from their wives and from

soothsayers; it seems that both were earnestly requested not to go to what proved to be a fatal meeting. The enquiring negro could also have claimed that there was little to choose between the spectacle of the dying president being carried on a shutter to Peterson's boarding house by the few who had stayed with him, and that of the three remaining faithful slaves of Caesar who, as Appian said, "placed the body on a litter and with uneven step—being an uneven number—bore him homeward who, a little before, had been master of the earth and sea."

Essentially the myth follows the same lines, though Julius Caesar was hymned in terms borrowed from Greek tragedy and the oriental cult of the dying god, while Lincoln had to be content with Whitman, negro spirituals and the preachers of the Bible Belt. But it is surely unusually interesting that the myth could develop and take such firm hold in the age of the daily paper, and in the case of a man who during his lifetime was as much photographed and written about as Lincoln was.

Eventually the tour could go on, and Ellen had other things than Lincoln's murder to think about. The distasteful episode was closed and she could look forward to a not too distant return. And so the valedictory:

"Good-bye! God bless you. *England is the only Place to live in.*

Yours affectionately,

ELLEN KEAN"

THE VAST LAND OF AUGUSTINISM

WHEN THE SECOND EDITION of M. Gilson's *Introduction à l'étude de saint Augustin* appeared in 1943, it was still a classic, though somewhat faded. Some remarked wryly that almost nothing written since 1930 had furnished grist for the author's vigorous thought. Since 1930, two centenary celebrations have left behind the *Acta* of a spate of congresses. A host of major studies have also in the meantime significantly altered the terrain of Augustinian scholarship. This is why, in 1961, when M. Gilson has consented to issue his 1943 edition in English translation,¹ the reader is prompted to feel that even classics, like ageing pugilists, may eventually lose their sense of timing.

¹ *The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*, by Etienne Gilson (Gollancz 42s).

The selective bibliography, with some serious omissions, which the translator has furnished at the end of the volume, reads like a list of studies which one wishes M. Gilson had taken into consideration in reworking his latest offering. The most recent thing that has in any way affected his text is Barion's *Plotin und Augustinus*, a work more limited in scope than its title suggests, and published in 1935. But, perhaps with an implicit judgment on the English reading public, the notes have all been placed in the rear, somewhat like skeletons in a remote attic.

M. Gilson refers to his book as a simple map through the vast land of Augustinism: something that suggests his original title was more exact. Unfortunately, where once there were only swamps and forests, thirty years of scholarship have built some teeming cities, and the map may on occasion provide as much confusion as orientation. There is, however, no book to serve the purpose Gilson once served so admirably, and it is not flattery to say that no one could do the job so well as he. It is only a pity that his far-ranging interests have prevented him from bending once more to this task.

Two perspectives are possible in trying to present Augustine's work: our day would more likely stress the development of Augustine's mind. But the cross-sectional view which dispenses with the adjustments that Augustine came to make in his initial views and accent is methodologically justifiable. In opting firmly for this second standpoint, M. Gilson almost certainly goes too far in raising legitimate methodology to a canon of interpretation with the claim that, over Augustine's writing career of more than two-score years, "there is not the slightest philosophical change in any of his essential theses."

He is unquestionably right in presenting Augustine's philosophical effort as invariably starting with the search for the happy life, a search which leads the soul on a journey to God. This journey can take the way of the Understanding or the Will, and M. Gilson carefully avoids taking these for two hermetically sealed approaches. What a present-day developmental approach would perhaps bring out is the real possibility that the heavy intellectualist cast of the first represents an earlier Augustine still much in the shadow of Plotinus, to whom the escape from the body through philosophical contemplation is central; the second approach (for which the bulk of the texts are from a later period) would then be that of an Augustine who has begun to displace the crux of the spiritual combat: the will, liberty, charity dominate, purification yields to humility, in short a self-consciously Christian accent recasts and breaks through Plotinus's categories.

In the final sections of his work, the author deals with the contemplation of God through his works, treating of creation and time, matter and forms, traces and images of God in creation. He ends with

an attempt to disengage the perennial aspects of Augustinism, as reflecting Augustine's own spiritual experience. This is one of the finest portions of the book, bringing into play the author's tremendous grasp of the history of thought. The treatment of Augustine's conversion might have been improved by consultation of Noerregaard's incomparable study, which, though it was published long before the first edition of Gilson's work, is never even mentioned.

Hardly a section of his book would not be sharpened by consulting studies that have appeared in the last twenty years. On Augustine's relation to his age and his varied "sources," the works of Theiler, Henry, Marrou, Courcelle, O'Meara and Dinkler are invaluable, if only for the questions they raise. M. Gilson could not be so confident today in his attribution of the Verbum parallels (*Confessions*, VII, 13; Gilson, p. 106) precisely to Plotinus.

The changing relations of reason and authority, too, might have been reworked. M. Gilson is more correct in later declaring Augustine's scepticism a "dogmatism momentarily discouraged" than in sketching it somewhat like a pit from which only acceptance of authority could save him. Augustine's early hopes for reason, in fact, can hardly be appreciated if one flatly denies that the *beata vita* of contemplative peace was ever envisaged as a possibility in this life, and if, at the same time, one makes no effort to gauge the effect of Augustine's early crypto-Origenism on his initial synthesis. Augustine did, indeed, reject Origenism, but the question is, when, and with what repercussions on his thought?

The equation of Manichaeism with a radical materialism is unfortunate, more recent studies having underlined that its mythological tenor permits its being something *neither* materialism *nor* metaphysical spiritualism, as Gilson and Bardy would have it, respectively. The entire section on *caritas* ignores the insights provoked by, and in response to, Nygren's controversial study: not even the bibliography mentions Burnaby's capital *Amor Dei*. And so it goes.

The book is well made; the translation smooth; the few printing slips hardly worth mentioning. But the reader is constantly at a loss to know why an "Fr." appears before each mention of Prosper Alfarcic's name in the notes.

Dating as it does substantially from 1935, it is strange to find that a fading process has not damaged Guardini's book¹ nearly so much as Gilson's. The reasons are manifold, chief among them that Guardini situates his discussion frankly on the level of religious philosophy. He openly avows his lack of "scientific" pretensions, something which may account for his works almost never appearing in the scientific

¹ *The Conversion of Augustine*, by Romano Guardini, translated by Elinor Briefs (Sands 188s).

bibliographies on Augustine's conversion. But a mediocre acquaintance with the scientific studies on this tormented question immediately puts the originality and special competence of Guardini's work into high relief.

Few quarrels among specialists have illustrated so graphically as the controversy on Augustine's conversion, the ability of any two men to read any single text in diametrically opposed fashion. The reason is that every man's reading is guided more or less consciously by a philosophic position on what a conversion should be, hence what the psychology of Augustine's conversion must have been. Anything he says contrary to this preconceived standard of interpretation is promptly discarded as a slip of memory, a rhetorical confabulation, or worse, a deliberate colouring of the truth. Augustine's psychology must never be more complex than that of the man interpreting him. It was just such a realisation that caused Alfred Loisy to observe that Alfarié's famous work, despite all its mountains of footnotes, would have profited from study in the psychology of conversion. He might have added that this must be first of all a study of the psychology of Augustine, of his background, his story and its meaning, set against the general analysis of what the proper structure of Christian consciousness is.

In short, it was the presuppositions themselves that must furnish the object of investigation. For this task, Guardini's special gifts, already sharpened by a study of the psychology of Christian existence in Dostoevsky and Pascal, had prepared him admirably, and he acquits himself of his task brilliantly.

The first part of the work examines the structure and interrelation of the basic inputs of Augustine's story: among them, his sensuality, intelligence and "heart," his mother and her by no means unambiguous role, the true character of eudaemonism in the Platonic context, and (the finest chapter in this section, and one of the most perceptive things written on the question), Augustine's "paganism." Only after his ground is firm does Guardini go on to the story of the *Confessions* now told in a sequence that is rendered absolutely luminous. Noerregaard and others had already shown that the little game of setting the *Confessions* against the early Dialogues was idle; so Guardini is entitled to follow uniquely the account given in the *Confessions*. The result is a masterful treatment, the best introduction to the meaning of the *Confessions* this reviewer has seen.

One would almost suspect that the translator had set out to prove that English was the God-intended language to render the supple vigour of Guardini's mastery of the German tongue: she has done her work splendidly well. Only an occasional definite article gives the reader pause—why *the* Eros when simply Eros would do? For the

inevitable second edition, a consistent spelling for Victorinus and Antony (see especially pp. 32-33 and the Index under *Victorianus*) should get attention. Coinages like *heteronomous* and *allonomous* would balance better with the contrasting *autonomous* (pp. 115-16). And "eudaemonistically" might fit better on p. 79.

The book is, incidentally, beautifully printed, with a useful index not in the original. In short, an altogether superlative piece of work.

M. Gilson once remarked that Augustine never hit upon a metaphysic adequate to his experience, but that as a phenomenologist of Christian experience, he remains unsurpassed. One of the richest fields for investigating this paradox is his *Ennarationes in Psalmos*. The first twenty-nine of those sermons the editors of the Ancient Christian Writers series present to us in this volume.¹ (A query: why not the first thirty-two? They form a homogeneous *bloc*, all being written and not preached, all dating from the same year, A.D. 392.)

This is not yet Augustine at the height of his power, so the Introduction is, perhaps rightly, brief to the point of being almost jejune, and the notes almost uniquely concerned with identifying the Scriptural citations that dot the text. But it would have been fascinating to have someone illuminate for us that interlacing of themes in an Augustine still struggling out of his philosophic cocoon and facing for the first time *en masse* the radically different world of the Hebrew authors of the Psalms. Surely in subsequent volumes it is the intention of the editors to lavish on us some of the scholarship that O'Meara, McCracken and others have exhibited under their banner, and introduce their readers more effectively into the rich spiritual world of Augustine's pastoral concern.

For those volumes, the bibliographical mentions will, of course, be considerably expanded. In spite of his merits, von Balthasar (on whom the translators heavily depend) would be the last to suppose these sermons can receive adequate treatment without consulting the works of Van der Meer and Pontet, to mention only the first two who come to mind. Lastly, could one suggest using another translation of the Bible? The translators seem to have used the Douai as a base, and the effect on their entire text is inevitable. The snap and directness of the original is muffled, and not always in the interests of literal fidelity. Let us hope this is an *hors d'œuvre* presaging a feast in the offing.

ROBERT O'CONNELL

¹ *St. Augustine on the Psalms*, translated and annotated by Dame Scholastica Hebgin and Dame Felicitas Corrigan. Ancient Christian Writers, Vol. XXIX (Longmans 35s).

CORRESPONDENCE

NEWMAN AND VON HÜGEL

The Editor, THE MONTH

6 July 1961

SIR,

Having read with interest and pleasure in *THE MONTH* for July Mr. R. K. Browne's account of the early meeting between Newman and Friedrich von Hügel, may I venture to point out that the "problem" to which he refers at the beginning and end of his articles is largely non-existent? There is no need to speculate why von Hügel "by the time he published his own major works" was "no longer conscious of his debt" (p. 33) to Newman, because in those same works he shows that he was conscious of it. In the first and greatest of them, *The Mystical Element of Religion*, published in 1908 when the Baron was fifty-six, he wrote after acknowledging the help of others:

But further back than all the living writers and friends lies the stimulation and help of him who was later on to become Cardinal Newman. It was he who first taught me to glory in my appurtenance to the Catholic and Roman Church, and to conceive this my inheritance in a large and historical manner, as a slow growth across the centuries, with an innate affinity to, and eventual incorporation of, all the good and true to be found mixed up with error and with evil in this chequered, difficult but rich world and life in which this living organism moves and expands. (Vol. I, Preface, p. xv.)

There are appreciative references to Newman in most of von Hügel's other books, viz., *Eternal Life, Essays and Addresses*, 2nd Series, and in his posthumous *The Reality of God*. Further, he wrote to Fr. Tyrrell on 4 March 1900: "I can say in all simple truth that, since Newman's death, there has been no English-speaking Catholic whose work appeals to me, and pierces, I think, to the very centre of questions, to a degree at all comparable to yours." (*Von Hügel and Tyrrell*, by M. D. Petre, p. 4).

One might quote other passages to show that, though it might at times be mixed with criticism, the Baron's admiration for the great Cardinal remained alive. Thus, in his *Notes on the Petrine Claims*, to show how the Church attracts the subtlest and deepest minds as well as the simplest, he wrote: "If we have our Neapolitan *lazzarone* and our Irish beggar-woman, we have our Petau and our Newman, our Möhler and our Duchesne."

Yours faithfully,

MICHAEL HANBURY, O.S.B.

St. Michael's Abbey,
Farnborough.

Mr. R. K. Browne writes:

I am grateful to Fr. Hanbury on two counts. It is good to know that my contribution ("article" is too kind a term for a compilation of this nature) gave pleasure to one who knows vastly more about von Hügel than I do and whose own article in *THE MONTH* for January was a source of so much pleasure and profit for me. Secondly, I appreciate the opportunity of rephrasing the problem which my unfortunate choice of words somewhat exaggerated.

Fr. Hanbury says that the "problem" to which I refer at the beginning and end of my contribution "is largely non-existent." In fact, the quotation with which I began from "the capital *Life* by Count Michael de la Bedoyère," to use Fr. Hanbury's description, raises at least two problems. The first is the extent of Newman's early influence on von Hügel, and the second is the paucity of references to Newman in von Hügel's writings and the critical nature of many of them. Having discovered a manuscript source which was unfortunately not available to Count de la Bedoyère and which shed some light on the first of these problems, I ventured, perhaps rashly, in my last paragraph to suggest a tentative solution for the second. It is this second problem which we are told is largely non-existent.

Now I gladly admit that I would have done better to write that von Hügel was no longer conscious of the full extent of his debt, and if this concession would satisfy Fr. Hanbury, I should be very happy. However, his words as they stand imply that Count de la Bedoyère was wrong in writing "There are suprisingly few references to Newman in the Baron's writings, and these few usually sound a critical note," and that I have accepted this statement uncritically.

When I was meditating this contribution I compiled a small *catena* of von Hügel's references to Newman. It struck me that it was a very short chain and that on the whole it substantiated Count de la Bedoyère's statement. Let us consider the matter in some detail.

Von Hügel published three major works in his lifetime: *The Mystical Element* in 1908, *Eternal Life* in 1912, and the *First Series of Essays and Addresses* in 1921. The last of these contains no explicit reference to Newman. The second has only two—one a passing reference to the *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, the other where Newman is bracketed with Rosmini: "Rosmini, the holy . . . Newman, the far-sighted."

It might be thought that Fr. Hanbury's quotation from the preface to *The Mystical Element* is decisive, but what happens when we turn to the body of the work? There are eight specific references to Newman (in a work of more than 850 pages). Of these, one or two are simply passing mentions and only one takes more than half a page but it must be admitted that most are at least mildly laudatory.

If we turn to the two major posthumous works: the Second Series of *Essays and Addresses* and *The Reality of God*, we find that the former has three references, one of which is purely historical and one the derogatory comparison with Huvelin. The latter has also three, one the passage, which I quoted in part, about the visit to the Botanical Gardens and which might be considered mildly critical, one a reference to the well-known saying about difficulties and doubts, and one on Newman's use of the text: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Seventeen references in more than two thousand closely packed pages scarcely seem excessive and would appear to justify Count de la Bedoyère's "surprisingly few." How far they are to be regarded as sounding a critical note is a matter for more subjective judgment complicated by the fact that von Hügel was normally so generous with praise where his sympathies were engaged. A handful of further references can be gleaned, like the two Fr. Hanbury quotes, from von Hügel's posthumously published correspondence but the majority of these are definitely critical.

My own rather superficial impression is that the Baron's admiration for Newman was at its height in the late 1870s, the period of the "talks," that it was still strong in the 'nineties when he wrote "I much preferred talking with Cardinal Newman to any possible talk with Pius IX" and when he was enthusiastically recommending him to Loisy, and that it began to decline with the turn of the century until in 1921 he could write, "I used to wonder, in my intercourse with John Henry Newman, how one so good, and who had made so many sacrifices to God, could be so depressing." If there is any substance in this judgment there is a problem of explanation, if not there is one of refutation. In either case, I still maintain that there is room for a fuller study of Newman's influence upon the Baron and of the latter's debt to his great predecessor. Dare we hope that Fr. Hanbury might be persuaded to undertake it?

REVIEWS

THE INQUIRING MIND

World Without End, by Dr. R. Pilkington (Macmillan 63s).

DR. PILKINGTON'S BOOK goes so far towards showing that it is not unreasonable to believe in Christianity as to justify a readiness actually to believe. Perhaps we find the first part of the book too distrustful of human intelligence. He easily shows that

science provides at best what used to be called "my endlessly corrigible hypothesis" and approximations to the probable. But we hold that the human mind can provide a different sort of certainty as to the existence of God, and that this knowledge is immutable. That the picture we form of God may change is an affair of imagination which, in this matter, the present writer does not even try to use. Our measurements of space and time cannot affect what our reason tells us about God; when H. G. Wells sneered at the Temple in Jerusalem because it was no larger than a big barn, one could but stand aghast. But while Dr. Pilkington, we think, is hesitant about the possibility of the production of life from non-living elements, he emphasises the essentially different nature of awareness, still more of self-awareness. But he has to grant that the scientist cannot say why there *is* anything at all, aware or unaware. In this part, in fact throughout, the author is better at demolishing hostile arguments than at constructing more than a grave possibility that the Christian interpretation of multiplex tradition is justifiable. A final act of faith is a gift of God, and not the upshot of arguments, even of cumulative argument, and still less of mere escapism. Miracles occupy much space, which is hardly necessary if a man believes in God. No law is interfered with: an analogy is the act of an architect who quarries a stone, shapes it, and places it in its proper, *i.e.*, his chosen place, in the cathedral he is building. True, he respects its nature and will not use it as, for example, wood. There must be an aptitude for the grace of a miracle. Though man is normally a conscious being, he is also social, and even if unconscious, even if having in him no more than the relics of faith deemed lost, or non-resistance to God's touch, he is incorporate (as at Lourdes) with a multitude who believe and pray. But in our days, how hard for faith to be utterly unclouded, or prayer, and even pity, totally unselfish! Once or twice the author loses touch. No one supposes that a saint's bone as such is wonder-working. A shadow, aprons and handkerchiefs were valued not "as such" (Acts v. 15, xix. 12), but because it was thought that contact with them implied contact with Peter or Paul, and so with Christ. And p. 112 is a little too flippant. Why St. Jude should be supposed to help in hopeless cases, I have no idea. But if I think he has helped me, why shouldn't I say so in *The Times*? I do not expect him to read it, but others will, and "I will give thanks to God (and His delegate) in the great assembly"! A detail—I do not believe that St. Paul could have been killed in A.D. 64, nor do I believe in "Q." But this little book may well shake the complacency of those who take it for granted that there is nothing to be said for historic Christianity, and encourage them to look further into the matter. And that is much.

C. C. MARTINDALE

THE WRITER AND CHRISTIANITY

The Ruined Tower, by Raymond Chapman (Geoffrey Bles 13s 6d).

IN *The Ruined Tower*, Mr. Chapman is concerned with the most urgent problem which confronts the serious, imaginative Christian writer today. He is not exercised about those who write theology or apologetics but rather about those writers who, in a society which is largely non-Christian, wish to communicate and to be understood. Mr. Chapman recognises, as some Christian critics have failed to do, that the symbols and dogmas of Christianity are not widely shared today and that the writer who is a practising Christian must, therefore, not only pay scrupulous attention to style and treatment but also go back and re-examine the very sources of his subject-matter. As he rightly declares—"It is necessary to be an existentialist—not in any limited philosophical sense—if fundamental values are still to be honoured. Denial that changes have taken place leads to the Ivory Tower, which may very soon become a ruined tower."

The Ruined Tower is a short book but it covers a good deal of ground—too much, perhaps, for a really profound study of its complex subject to be possible. Mr. Chapman devotes a good deal of space to a rather simplified account of symbolism, and he is also eager to point out that we are living today in an age of general unbelief, not simply in one that is inimical to Christianity. He is right, I think, in seeing Communism as something very like a religious power, but wrong when he says, "The period of violent opposition to the Church as the opponent of reform and progress is over." Mr. Chapman seems not to have read or seen the plays of John Osborne since, if he had, he would recognise in them a real hatred of Christianity, a hatred which makes Archie Rice, in *The Entertainer*, declare that the things he loathes most in the world are "clergymen, nuns and dogs."

But this is a minor error on Mr. Chapman's part; a more serious one is that which makes him assert that "Yeats too, after a lifetime of devotion to successive causes, made the inner voyage as a refuge from conflict." This is simply not true, as any sensitive reading of Yeats's last poems will confirm. Mr. Chapman is right, however, in saying that many writers today, both Christian and non-Christian, have made their subject-matter their own private inner worlds. Virginia Woolf was, surely, this kind of writer, and even Eliot himself does not entirely escape the charge.

When he defines the real problems of the religious writer now, Mr. Chapman is just and perceptive; he says, "His [that of the Christian writer] experience, his whole being, is caught up in a faith that gives him a special view of all the problems of human life. He cannot write in defiance of that faith, even if he wished to do so, without the

insincerity, the withholding, which is fatal to artistic greatness," and again, "The common problems of the artist are not changed but rather intensified in the artist who is also a Christian. In all creative work there is a tension between the ideal and the actual, the first vision and the finished production. . . . The imposing of order on chaos is the work alike of the Creator and the creative artist."

All this is well said and it is also true that, as Mr. Chapman further declares, the Christian artist is not a propagandist for his faith, nor is he obliged to write of it directly; it may, indeed, be only a fugitive part of the main content of his work. What is certainly true is that the Christian artist will order and interpret his material in a very different way from that of his contemporaries. But I do not think that Mr. Chapman emphasises strongly enough the undoubted fact that the Christian writer who really wants to communicate must use the language and idiom of his own time; the important Christian writer will always share at least the stylistic and idiomatic mannerisms of his own secular contemporaries. The danger among some Christian writers, and especially perhaps among Catholic ones, is that they will be tempted to retreat either into the dead traditions of the past or into the security of a small coterie of fellow-believers. We are all familiar with the writer and reader who consider Francis Thompson, Coventry Patmore, Belloc and Chesterton to be great writers simply because they are Catholic writers. It is a very dangerous heresy which thus confuses truth or fittingness of subject-matter with skill in execution.

Mr. Chapman is far too intelligent to associate himself with this heresy but he has, I think, forgotten one very important aspect of the predicament of the Christian writer today. He tends to ignore the fact that the life and tension in the work of such a writer may reside in the very conflict between faith and desire, between the City of God and the Cities of Men as we know them today. The greatest Christian artists work out such conflicts in their writing itself. Thus Hopkins dared to touch the edges of despair in the lines:

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?

And furthermore, the Christian writer is bound to find himself affected by the mood of his time; if he is sensitive and honest, he cannot erect a wall of complacent certainty between himself and his non-Christian contemporaries. As Mr. Chapman indicates, the main theme of most writers today is "loneliness." We can find this presented in such different writers as, for example, Samuel Becket,

Tennessee Williams, Harold Pinter, Philip Larkin, and Carson McCullers. And, as Mr. Chapman suggests, this is, in effect, a very Christian theme since it was the Fall which brought about man's condition of loneliness, and the Incarnation which redeemed it. Thus many non-Christian writers are dealing with a fundamentally Christian theme, though the conclusions which they draw are, of course, usually very different from those of the Christian writer.

Mr. Chapman ends his book with a cursory study of three overtly Christian writers—T. S. Eliot, Charles Williams and Christopher Fry. His eagerness to find examples to prove his own theories has, I think, led him to overrate the purely literary qualities of the two last-named writers. Here, he has fallen a victim to the heresy which I have already mentioned, the heresy which persuades a Christian that the writing of a fellow-believer is important simply because its subject-matter is entirely orthodox.

The Ruined Tower deals with a vast subject and if it does not always give the right answers, it usually asks the right questions. How, then, are we to solve the conflicts of the Christian writer today? In the first place, I think that we should not become too self-conscious about these problems, we should not be coaxed into believing that they are different in *kind* from any other artistic dilemmas. All artists are committed to something and all artists are, if they have any value at all, truth-tellers. Literary criticism does not make moral judgments and yet, paradoxically, the presentation of morality in a particular work of art may be one of the things which it has to pass judgment on. Thus any critic, whether Christian or non-Christian, would be obliged to point out that the artistic weaknesses in Graham Greene's latest novel, *The Burn-Out Case*, are, to a certain extent, caused by the moral weaknesses of the chief character; the book fails through a kind of *accidie* which pervades the whole novel. For morality, after all, is not something set apart from literature. Nor is faith. It is the task of the Christian writer to be loyal to his beliefs, to his talents, and to the literary traditions of his own time. If conflict arises—and conflict is the very heart of all worthwhile literature—then it may be that the Christian writer's conflicts are not fundamentally different from those of his non-Christian contemporaries, but only more specific, more clear-cut.

We live in an age which talks and writes much of trends, tendencies and predicaments. It would be a pity if the writer who is a Christian were to become too obsessed by these passing fashions, or to become too concerned with his own particular difficulties. Literary talent is a gratuitous gift and the genuine writer will go on working however formidable the obstacles which confront him. Mr. Chapman's book is a useful clarification of a number of points which may baffle Christian

readers. I rather doubt, however, if it will have much effect on any Christian *writer*. But perhaps, after all, it was never intended to.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS

THE FIRE OF DIVINE LOVE

The Splendour of Pentecost, by Dom E. Flicoteaux, O.S.B. (Helicon Press, Baltimore \$3.50).

IN RECENT YEARS Dom Flicoteaux has specialised in studies of the kind exemplified by this book, namely, the exposition of some chosen theme in the light of its expression in the liturgy. His articles and books are always devotional and stimulating, and are clearly the fruit of much meditation on the liturgy with especial reference to its theological background. This one is fully up to the standard of his previous works.

He treats of Pentecost in its widest meaning as referring to the fifty-day period during which the mystery of our redemption, considered as a unity, is celebrated with triumphant joy. There is a steady progression of thought, all concerned with the one theme of Christ's return to His Father, from that aspect of it which emphasises His victory to the other in which our sharing in the fruits of it is brought to the fore. The final solemnity, on the fiftieth day itself, is seen as the completion of the paschal work and its renewal in every generation by the pouring forth upon the Church of the Spirit whom Christ ever continues to send upon those united to Him by the paschal sacrament of Baptism.

Thus the actual feast of Pentecost is not primarily a feast of the Holy Ghost, but is a mystery of Christ the Redeemer now completing His work by ensuring its efficacy and continuance throughout time.

Just as the sacrament of Baptism is most closely connected with the feast of Easter, so Confirmation comes into its own at Pentecost. Each recurring Pentecost Day may be regarded as an anniversary of our Confirmation which was, in a sense, our own personal Pentecost. For, as the various prayers of its liturgy show, the celebration of the feast is intended to renew and strengthen in us the graces we received in Confirmation, to make the fire of divine love burn more ardently in our hearts, and to inspire us ever more powerfully to bear witness to Christ in our daily lives.

Dom Flicoteaux deals very ably with the problem which arose when Pentecost Day was given an octave which not only prolongs the paschal season beyond the traditional number of fifty days, but also fills the week with a spirit that seems incompatible with the Ember Days occurring in its course. He sees no adequate reason for regretting the institution of this octave or for desiring its suppression, and points

to several features of the Ember Day liturgy which are in admirable concord with the joyful mood of the week; these give to this particular set of Ember Days a tonality quite different from that of the others, so that they fit in harmoniously with the echo of the great feast which precedes them.

The book is well produced except for one annoying feature—the relegation of all footnotes to a collection at the back. Reference to them thus involves a constant turning of pages; and even this is made more difficult by the omission, from the collection of footnotes, of the chapter headings. As an example, suppose one is reading page 73; one sees at the top of the page the heading “The Week of Pentecost.” But there is a footnote, 14. There is no mention of “The Week of Pentecost” at the back, but only of chapter numbers, each followed by many footnotes. Is one to read note 14 of Chapter 11, 13, 15, 19? The only way to find out is to return to the text, and go back to the beginning of the chapter in order to discover that “The Week of Pentecost” is Chapter 17. Then, at last, and by yet another turning back to the end, the desired footnote can be identified. Publishers ought not to do this kind of thing—it is infuriating. All footnotes should be at the bottom of the pages where one can see at a glance whether they are mere references (e.g., Gal. ii. 20) or paragraphs containing information requiring to be read.

CLIFFORD HOWELL

CREDULOUS INCREDULITY

Ghost and Ghoul, by T. C. Lethbridge (Routledge 18s).

A FEW STORIES of ghostly apparitions—only two seen by the author—a few experiences of an unpleasant invisible presence—miscalled ghouls—and experiences of telepathy and precognition—interesting to read but adding very little to the evidence for such paranormal experiences—such is the positive contribution of this book to its subject. Of greater but more painful importance is its manifestation of the gulf that yawns today between even those who, like the author, have rejected the materialism dogmatically affirmed in the name of science and Christian believers.

I agree with Mr. Lethbridge that telepathy between the living explains most—I am indeed disposed to say all—stories of ghostly apparitions. I cannot find sufficient evidence for survival, which the author regards as almost proved. Belief in survival in my view rests entirely on faith in the Christian revelation and the experience *in this life* of contact with the Eternal.

Precognition is not, as Mr. Lethbridge holds, incompatible with free choice. In any case God certainly sees all the choices made freely

by created spirits. Are they then less free if, as I believe—the author does not suggest this explanation of precognition—my central self present to all the superficial experiences and events of my life sees them in this unchanging present from birth till death?

The very idea of revelation is dismissed cavalierly as unsupported assertion. That reasons can be given, if not for the doctrine revealed, for the fact of its revelation, is not even considered, far less refuted. The miracles performed by Our Lord and His disciples are held to be purely natural effects of manipulating a psychophysical force according to a recipe discovered by Christ, inherited by His followers and soon lost. It has been omitted or excised from the Gospels (137). Its employment to kill Ananias and Saphira is an example of black magic.

Mr. Lethbridge's theological history is for a learned archaeologist surprising. An early Irish monastery was "built before the days of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland" by members of a Celtic Church which unlike the Roman Catholic "seemed to me to have had the right ideas" (31), calculating Easter by an antiquated calendar, wearing a different tonsure! St. Gregory the Great is placed in the eighth century (34). The Norsemen, we are told, did *not* massacre unarmed monks. The monks of Crowland and many another English and French monastery did not notice any reluctance to do so. "Christians held" the "belief in reincarnation for some five hundred years, until it became frowned upon as a heresy" (148). Christians apparently regard the harps of apocalyptic symbolism as instruments of a literal orchestra.

On the other hand Mr. Lethbridge is disposed to credit the claim made by some "psychics" to be able to leave their earthly physical body to occupy and employ another of less gross composition.

It is depressing that the modern world has so far departed from Christianity that such men as our author can dismiss it with contemptuous prejudice, while ready to assent to beliefs for which no credible evidence can be adduced.

E. I. WATKIN

SHORTER NOTICES

The Monks of Qumran: The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls, by E. Sutcliffe, S.J. (Burns and Oates 30s).

THE NOTICE OF THIS BOOK has been long delayed partly because new discoveries on the cliff-shores of the Dead Sea keep being made. But, so far as we know, nothing substantial has been found able to modify the author's views. We can therefore very willingly

recommend this soberly written book, which is a monument of industry and an example of well-balanced judgment based on an impartial study of the evidence, and an estimate of the various theories to which it has given birth. Despite Fr. Sutcliffe's desire not to "multiply entities," we are rather sorry that he did not at least sketch the romantic story of the discovery of the scrolls, for memories are short: for how many are not the first and second world wars already becoming confused? For how many, alas, is not the wonderful Baring-Chesterton-Belloc triad fading from their horizon? But after all, the site of the Qumran buildings and their agitated history are well described and the manner of life lived there by the "Monks." As to that way of life, we fear that its austerity would have led to a multiplication of regulations not, alas, anointed by the grace of Christ. In doctrine, we do not see anything that deviated from or did much to develop the hereditary belief of Israel. We note that a more ancient, solar, calendar was followed, different from the lunar one used in Jerusalem. This makes easier of acceptance the theory that the Last Supper was eaten on Tuesday, no new suggestion, and one to which Fr. Sutcliffe leans. We ourselves sought enlightenment chiefly on the identification, if possible, of the "Wicked Priest" and the "Teacher of Righteousness." The former is with cogent reasons recognisable in the person of Jonathan Maccabaeus once he joined the priestly with the civil supremacy in himself and proceeded to persecute. The latter has to be left vague: in no way, however, can he be assimilated to, let alone identified with, Our Lord, as in this country Mr. Allegro was tending to do. Nor can the Baptist be shown to have owed anything to Qumran or the "Essenes," though he must certainly have been acquainted with them.

All cards, so to say, are put upon the table by means of a full translation of the original documents (pp. 131-204), and apt quotations from Philo, Josephus and Pliny: there are notes, rich indices, and a chronological summary. Also six illustrations, and diagrams. A vast erudition underlies this modest, lucid and invaluable book.

Crime Before Calvary, by Guy Schofield (Putnam 18s).

The Secret of the Kingdom, by Mika Waltari, translated by Naomi Walford (Putnam 18s).

MR. SCHOFIELD is known as a scholar of worth, but we cannot judge this book up to the standard we have the right to ask. He warns us by saying that his "narrative is a speculative reconstruction of history"; and this is good inasmuch as it allows that the gospels provide us with *history* (including the miraculous, e.g., raising of

Lazarus), and we also agree that the gospels are very terse especially about what is subjective. They are concerned with handing on Christ's message. But Mr. Schofield speculates *ad libitum*. We hear that Christ called Herod "that fox"; but also we read "He smelt the fox—or perhaps we should rather say the vixen behind the fox." This brings us to his main theory—Pilate was a bully and a brute; Herod Antipas was a weakling but no licentious scoundrel: the controlling figure throughout was Herodias. We had always thought of Pilate as something of a bully, as despising and disliking the Jews, but as genuinely wishing to set Jesus free and yielding only when the Jewish authorities threatened to tell Caesar that he was favouring disloyalty. Even his washing of his hands—no Roman or even "naturally" symbolic act—is interpreted as a studied insult to the Jews, so fond of ritual hand-washing. By an elaborate *échafaudage* of hypotheses, many of them plausible but few convincing—"Is it too much to assume . . . ?" "Herodias must have hoped . . .," quite an exciting drama is built up with Herodias at the centre. We really know nothing of her save that she was a horrible woman and defeated in her ambitions. We prefer our history straight.

Mr. Waltari's book does not profess to be anything but straight fiction, and we far prefer this, even though it introduces persons known to us from the gospels, and we cannot refuse him the right to allow this. If we read the book aright, its theme is this—Marcus Manilianus arrives in Jerusalem on the very day of the Crucifixion and becomes intimately attracted by Christ as king, but cannot see, even after Pentecost, that the kingdom has arrived. None the less, we think that Marcus is inevitably moving towards citizenship in that kingdom, so tender a growth as yet, barely visible amid the world's luxuriant jungle. But we are not sure that an author has the right to equip people—who after all were real and lived—with states of mind for which there is no evidence: thus (we do not forget Browning's wonderful description of the risen Lazarus) Mr. Waltari here represents Lazarus as indignant at being forced back into the discomforts of this life: Matthew is shown as still jealously exclusive of non-Jews from Christian privileges (well, at first that is what the apostles were!): but allowing for all this, we think the book by this Finnish author to be very fine indeed: we sympathise with every step taken by Marcus under the mysterious spell of the Crucified; and we thoroughly agree that human creatures cannot be expected to act all at once consistently, especially if this means reversing all their long-formed habits of thought and act, and Simon of Cyrene is convincing. This story could easily have been scabrous but never is at all.

The Church in Crisis: A History of the Twenty Great Councils, by Philip Hughes (Burns and Oates 35s).

A VERY TOPICAL BOOK, in view of the coming General Council. It will certainly arouse interest and confidence in the work which is now being prepared, to read this account of work of previous Councils. It does bring out how in most cases the conditions were, humanly speaking, hopelessly unpromising. Usually the calling of any particular Council was against the interest of some Christian ruler or other, and because of the intrigues of men of influence, free discussion seemed impossible. There were Councils, like the early Eastern Councils and Trent, where the main work was the defining of doctrine. There were also Councils, like those of the Middle Ages in the West, which concentrated rather on reform and the difficult question of the appointment of bishops by kings. It would seem likely that the coming Council will combine these two functions.

The subject of the book is a vast one, of course. Fr. Hughes has, however, given a clear picture both of the personalities involved in each Council and of the achievements of each, both in development of doctrine and in reforms.

The Early Christians, by M. Gough (Thames and Hudson 30s).

WE ARE GLAD of this volume in the series "Ancient Peoples and Places": General Editor, Glyn Daniel. Educated at Stonyhurst and Cambridge, the author had long acquaintance with the nearer East (Crete and Greece included) and is Director designate of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara. Studying his subject chiefly from the archaeological angle, he is almost bound to take as his starting-point the freedom of the Christian Church proclaimed by Constantine (the preternatural portents connected with his victory are variously reported and, we think, moulded only by degrees into the traditional shape), since before this there is hardly any concrete evidence. He ends with the definite eclipse of Rome by Constantinople in A.D. 526 when Justinian became emperor. The historical summary which is prefixed to the arrival of Constantine is very good, though we might differ as to details, e.g., about the peculiarly militarist character of Mithraism and its allegedly austere ethic. A certain dry humour—"Just as not so long ago the 'Ancient Britons' were popularly presented in terms of Druids, coracles and woad, so the age of the early Christians was often presented as one of unremitting persecution": it is ironic that one of the most calculated persecutions was due to the serene Marcus Aurelius. Little enough survives from pre-Constantine days except paintings, safe in the Catacombs. Interestingly,

pagan motifs were freely made use of, partly no doubt for safety's sake—the cross, Christ Himself, were best disguised; partly because Christians could not be asked to invent a new art out of hand, and liked what they were accustomed to—and possibly because they did not see why the pagans “should have all the best tunes.”

From Constantine onwards the background is theological, and the problem is the origin and development of basilicas—derived from “churches in houses,” or great audience chambers, palaces or law-courts? Both, probably: how seldom does the world provide us with an “either: or”! And then the period of domes and of mosaics, and the final transference of splendour to Byzantium and the “miracle of Sancta Sophia,” poor church, later to become a mosque, and then to lose the aspect of even that, and to be cleaned and frozen into a museum. The ultimate rift between East and West was, we consider, due really to no theological nicety, but to the immemorial contempt felt by the Greek for the uncultured Roman, to the grandeur of Byzantium compared with Rome, rapidly becoming a grass-grown ruin; and to the all-but impossibility of translating any important theological term from Greek into Latin. This beautifully produced book is adorned with many diagrams and 81 fine plates, only we wish that the Notes could have been attached to each, instead of having to be hunted up at the end.

The Way of Perfection, by St. Teresa of Avila. Translated by a Benedictine of Stanbrook (Burns and Oates 18s).

ST. TERESA OF AVILA needs little or no introduction, even to an English public. Nor does this volume under review, since this is the sixth edition of a translation that first appeared in 1910. Suffice it to say that on this occasion Burns and Oates have provided a most attractive volume; one very easy to read, a perfect bedside book.

The Way of Perfection was written by St. Teresa at the instigation of her own nuns in the first convent of the Discalced Carmelites, that of San José in Avila. They wished for guidance on prayer and recollection and this is exactly what the ever practical St. Teresa provided for them, and, incidentally, for us since her writings are as helpful and easy to read now as then.

The translator faced a hard task for the saint's colloquial and often ungrammatical Spanish can be difficult to render into English. Nevertheless, this book reads pleasantly though one misses in translation the engaging habit of St. Teresa to scatter affectionate diminutives throughout her work. A further difficulty confronting the translator is the choice of editions, for at least two autograph manuscripts exist, with variants, not to mention the other contemporary copies made

at her instigation for the newly founded convents throughout Spain. Since this translation is intended for "the benefit of the souls of the faithful rather than the intellect of the student" (translator's preface), one cannot look to it for textual perfection. Variants and additions are in fact given in parentheses rather than footnotes. The latter are annotations of the translator, giving cross-references to other works of the saint or Biblical references. The index has been slightly revised since the original edition. The introduction is an adequate one for the general reader though it leaves to one side the theories on the title and the actual dating of the composition. The translator's intention of providing a handbook for the faithful is attractively and agreeably fulfilled.

Each Month With Christ, by Emeric A. Lawrence, O.S.B. (Helicon Press, Baltimore \$2.55).

THIS is a series of meditations on the main themes of the liturgy through the year. It is interestingly written, with striking illustrations, which do help to make the author's meaning clear. The book should help those who wish to find inspiration for their prayer in following the Missal.

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The Editor, THE MONTH
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ONE of the great occupational risks of business life under the pressure of to-day is that the practical man of affairs neglects his outside reading, and all too easily falls into a narrow circle of immediate preoccupations. There is always loss in this, and the Catholic business or professional man, as a member of the Church Universal, has a particularly strong reason for keeping his mind open to wider horizons. Certainly it was never more necessary than now to follow world happenings. A direct chain of causes and effects ties every business to economical changes in the world, which are themselves as often the consequence as the cause of changes in men's political and social ideas. These ideas in their turn come out of the religions, or irreligions, of contemporary man.

In many countries the Catholic Church is at the heart of the battle of ideas. Cardinal Manning's saying that "all great quarrels between men are at bottom theological" suggests that there is, in fact, no better starting-point or background for understanding the modern world than a Catholic one. Because of this approach and background

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